STORIES FROM ANCIENT CANAAN

SECOND EDITION

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

MICHAEL D. COOGAN
MARK S. SMITH

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR *STORIES FROM ANCIENT CANAAN*

"*Stories from Ancient Canaan* has been well known and established over many years for its translations of the ancient Ugaritic myths and legends. Now, in its new, second edition, it should become a textbook of choice for all students interested in the cultures of the biblical world. Everything in the book has been reconsidered, from the translations, to the introductions, the bibliography, and the glossary of names, and all these have been revised and updated to reflect the latest scholarship. The translations themselves are fluent and readable—and the most easily accessible of all those available, allowing both nonprofessional and professional readers alike to grasp at once the overall story line and the details that fit into it; a new and much appreciated feature are the descriptions, without cluttering up the text, of what is preserved and not preserved of the ancient tablets being translated. The introductions and glossary, in turn, lay out concisely and lucidly the essential features of the culture, religion, and literature of ancient Ugarit and their relationships to the Hebrew Bible as well as the content and themes of the translated myths and legends. Two additional and important Ugaritic myths are included, which round out the collection. It is a pleasure to welcome back an old friend, and that in a sparkling new dress which will ensure its continued long life and value."

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"Coogan's elegant translations of Canaanite myths in *Stories from Ancient Canaan* have served students well for more than thirty years. Now this classic has been expanded and updated to take into account advances in the understanding of Ugaritic, while maintaining its original accessibility and accuracy. This new version will continue to introduce readers to these texts, marvelous in their own right and essential for understanding the Bible."

—Lawrence E. stager, Dorot Professor of the Archaeology of Israel, Harvard University, and coauthor of *Life in Biblical Israel*

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Cover illustration: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. A stela from Ugarit, dating to ca. 1300 BCE, about 18 inches (47 cm) high, made of serpentine. It depicts the god El, who is bearded and with a horned headdress characteristic of deities, seated on a throne facing a worshipper, perhaps the king of Ugarit or a priest.

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For our teachers of Ugaritic
George S. Glanzman, SJ
Frank Moore Cross
Marvin H. Pope
Jonas C. Greenfield

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PREFACE

The first edition of this book has had a long shelf life. In the more than three decades since it was published, our knowledge of Ugaritic has advanced, and English style has changed as well. For this second edition, we have revised the text in the light of these developments, while retaining the general approach and format of the first. We have also added two important texts that shed further light on Ugaritic myth and religion: *The Lovely Gods* and *El's Drinking Party*. (See "A Note on Sources" p. 22.)

These translations were prompted by our experience in teaching undergraduate courses in ancient Near Eastern religions. While accurate, readable, and inexpensive versions of Mesopotamian and Egyptian religious literature are available, a similar edition of the principal Canaanite texts does not exist. This book is intended to fill that gap. It is written for the reader without linguistic or scholarly background and should prove valuable for students of the history of religion, of the Bible, and of comparative literature.

Following general practice we have normalized most proper names to correspond to their biblical cognates. In biblical references, chapter and verse numbers follow the New Revised

Standard Version. The excerpts from *Enuma Elish* quoted on page 98 are taken from E. A. Speiser's translation in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ed. James B. Pritchard [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 3rd edition, 1969], 61 and 64).

Coogan's study of the language and literature of Ugarit began at Fordham University under George S. Glanzman, SJ, and continued under Frank Moore Cross at Harvard University. A student of both Coogan and Cross while at Harvard, Smith studied Ugaritic with Marvin H. Pope at Yale University and under Jonas C. Greenfield at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. We are indebted to our extraordinary teachers, and if we have been able to communicate the substance and the spirit of this difficult material, it is in no small way due to the insights they shared with us.

Michael D. Coogan
Mark S. Smith

INTRODUCTION

“I have a word to tell you,

a message to recount to you:

the word of the tree and the whisper of the stone,

the murmur of the heavens to the earth,

of the seas to the stars.

I understand the lightning that the heavens

do not know,

the word that people do not know,

and earth’s masses cannot understand.

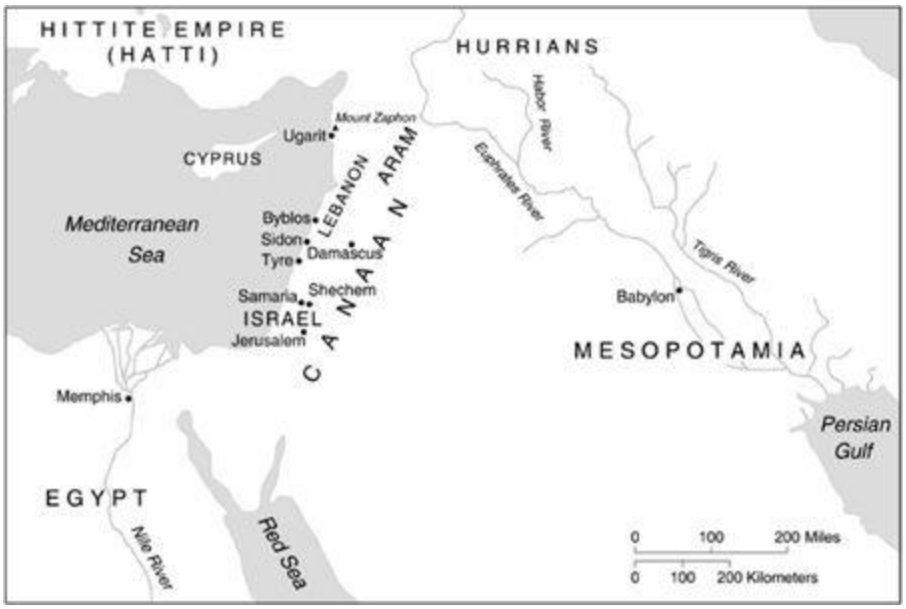
Come, and I will reveal it.”

These lines were written more than three thousand years ago, when "the mystery sang alive still in the water and singing birds," in Dylan Thomas's lyrical phrasing. In context they are part of an invitation from one deity to another. The speaker is the storm god Baal, and the text in which he is quoted comes from ancient Ugarit, a city destroyed not long after 1200 BCE and rediscovered in 1928 thanks to a Syrian plowman who accidentally opened a tomb.

Ugarit, now called Ras Shamra (Cape Fennel), is located on the north Syrian coast of the Mediterranean and was one of the major Canaanite city-states during the second millennium BCE. The vaulted tombs and painted pottery of Ugarit's cemetery initially led archaeologists to think that the city was a Mycenaean colony, but as the first texts were excavated, deciphered, and translated, it became clear that Ugarit was Semitic. There were Mycenaeans there, but they were only part of a polyglot and cosmopolitan port that included Hittites, Babylonians, Hurrians, and Egyptians, as well as the native Canaanites.

View of the ruins of the residential quarter of Ugarit, looking west toward the Mediterranean Sea **(Photograph by Wayne T. Pitard. Used with permission.)**

The term "Canaanite" requires explanation. The Canaanites were a group of Semitic peoples who during the third and second millennia BCE occupied parts of what is today Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. They were never organized into a single political unit; nevertheless, the relatively independent city-states such as Ugarit, Byblos, Sidon, Tyre, Shechem, and Jerusalem had a common language and culture (with local idiosyncrasies), which we call Canaanite. To give just one example, the same type of alphabetic cuneiform writing used in the texts translated here has turned up at several sites in Israel and Palestine. According to ancient Egyptian geography, Canaan's northern border was just south of Ugarit, yet it is clear from innumerable religious and literary features that Ugarit had enormous cultural overlap with Canaanite society. With this in mind, we call its literature "stories from ancient Canaan."



The Ancient Near East. **(Map created by Blue Heron Bookcraft, Inc. Copyright © Michael D. Coogan.)**

THE TABLETS

During the nearly continuous excavations conducted at and near Ugarit since 1929, thousands of texts have been found. Most are tablets of baked clay, often damaged over the centuries. They include diplomatic correspondence, legal records, remedies for horses' ailments, long lists of gods and sacrificial offerings, dictionaries of word equivalents in the various languages used in the city, and the oldest complete alphabet, with an order substantially the same as that of our own. The seventeen tablets translated in this book were found in the environs of the city's temple district, and most had the same scribe, Ilimilku from Shuban. His clear, precise touch with reed on damp clay is unmistakable, and he occasionally signed his work in scribal notes or colophons at the end or on the side of a tablet. But Ilimilku did not compose these texts: he copied them under the aegis of the chief priest Attanu. Both were subsidized by Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit, one of at least three kings of the city with that name. This Niqmaddu reigned in either the mid-fourteenth century or the late thirteenth century BCE. Thus, although the present copies date to the Late Bronze Age, the age of the myths themselves is not certain. Most scholars agree that

they could have been composed as much as two or three centuries before they were finally written down.

The first of the stories presented here, *Aqhat,* survives on three tablets and tells the story of Aqhat, the son of Danel, from his conception to his death and its consequences. The fragmentary work known as *The Rephaim* describes a visit of those beneficent underworld deities to Danel, possibly after his son's murder. The story of *Kirta,* also preserved on three tablets, is an account of that king's quest for an heir, his illness and recovery, and his son's revolt. The *Baal* cycle, on six tablets and some fragments, is the episodic presentation of the storm god's defeat of his enemies and his assumption of kingship over divinities and humanity. *The Lovely Gods* and *El's Drinking Party* are each written on a single tablet.

Most of the tablets are about the size of a large modern book. Both sides of a tablet could be inscribed with from one to four columns divided by vertical lines, each column containing up to fifty lines of text written continuously, without spacing according to meter or sense. The scribe only rarely put single or double horizontal dividing lines between the lines of the text to indicate paragraphs or endings of episodes or to separate rubrics from the text proper. Occasionally the title of a tablet was given at its beginning; thus, two of the three parts of *Kirta* begin with the note "Belonging to (the series called) *Kirta*"; similarly we find "Belonging to *Baal*" and "Belonging to *Aqhat*" once each. Such a cataloging device or colophon may have been written on each of the major mythological tablets, but since the tops of the columns have often broken off, we cannot be sure.

THE GODS AND GODDESSES OF UGARIT

The gods and goddesses of Ugarit are major characters in these stories, and they are the focus of many other texts, especially ritual ones, as well as of architectural remains and religious art. Here is a brief introduction to the Ugaritic pantheon that draws on all sources.

The head of the pantheon was El, as his epithets "the King" and "the Father of Gods" indicate. In the lists of deities and of the offerings made to them, El generally precedes the other major gods, although he himself can be preceded by "the older gods," the generation of predecessors he presumably had supplanted before Ugarit's zenith in the latter part of the second millennium BCE. El's name is a common noun meaning "god." Its precise etymology is uncertain: two major theories derive it from roots meaning "strong" or "first." In his role as head of the pantheon, El is well attested throughout the Semitic world. Compare, for example, the Arabic cognate "Allah," which literally means "the god" or simply "God"; the epithets "the Merciful" and "the Kind" used of Allah are strikingly close to the Ugaritic designations of El as "the Kind, the Compassionate." The home of El, "the Creator of Creatures," is a mountain from whose base flow the two rivers that are the source of all fresh water in the world. There he lives in a tent, and there the sons of El, the divine Assembly over which he presides, meet. In Ugaritic art, El is depicted as a bearded patriarchal figure, as in the stela shown on the cover of this book, although his behavior at a drinking feast, as described in the tablet translated here as *El's Drinking Party,* is hardly dignified.

One of the issues connected with El is how to assess his importance in Ugaritic religion. By the time the *Baal* cycle was composed, Baal was king of the pantheon, expressed in his boast,

"I alone rule over the gods." This claim is echoed by the goddesses Anat and Asherah. Nevertheless, in the surviving Canaanite stories El is by no means an impotent ruler. It is he, and no other god, who can cure Kirta; it is he to whom Baal turns for help for Danel and whose permission Anat requests to take her revenge on Aqhat; and, significantly, it is he who sides against Death in Baal's favor. The best explanation of these discrepancies is that Canaanite theology was not static. While El was the head of the pantheon, and actively so in earlier stories such as *Aqhat* and *Kirta,* Baal was becoming the dominant Canaanite deity, and the *Baal* cycle perhaps reflects this process. There seems to be a sort of co-regency between El as the executive power and Baal as the military power in the cosmos.

Baal is the Ugaritic god of agricultural fertility and the city's divine patron, as his title "Lord of Ugarit" shows. One of the two large temples discovered at Ras Shamra is dedicated to him. Baal's home is on Mount Zaphon, a high peak north of Ugarit and often visible from it. Mount Zaphon itself had divine status, as we learn from Baal's invitation to Anat in *Baal*:

Come, and I will reveal it:

in the midst of my mountain, divine Zaphon.

Baal is depicted on a stela from Ras Shamra with a club in one hand and a lightning bolt in the other (see p. 96), and in the texts he is often given the accoutrements of a storm—clouds, wind, and rain. In the introduction to the *Baal* cycle we will have occasion to study Baal's origin, character, and functions more closely.

Three goddesses appear regularly in the stories translated here—Astarte, mentioned only in passing, Asherah, and Anat. The latter two have significant though not dominant roles in the myths, for Ugaritic theology, like Ugaritic society, was patriarchal. Asherah is El's consort and the mother of the gods. The only goddess with a vivid character is Anat. She is Baal's sister and is closely identified with him as a successful opponent of Sea, Death, and other destructive powers. Her fierce temper is directed against gods and mortals alike. With her thirst for violence and her macabre trappings—a necklace of human heads, a belt of human hands—Anat resembles the Hindu goddess Kali.

The craftsman of the gods, Kothar-wa-Hasis, was thought to live far away, either in Crete to the west or in Egypt to the south. This reflects the Canaanites' dependence on foreign artisans for both inspiration and execution. We have already noted the presence of Mycenaean painted pottery at Ugarit, but the most significant source of motifs in Canaanite art was Egypt. Like Hephaestus, the divine craftsman of the Greek pantheon, Kothar is a master artisan whose skill provides the gods—and occasionally chosen mortals—with weapons and palaces, but unlike his Greek counterpart he also offers prophetic words and divinatory spells.

Finally, we come to Death, Baal's adversary and antithesis, who embodies the forces of sterility and drought. The Levantine landscape is divided into three general areas along its eastern and southern borders: the arable land; semidesert, the territory where nomads graze their flocks of sheep and goats; and the desert itself. This last is Death's domain, and the "desert pasture" in front of it is "Death's shore." His underworld home could be reached by raising the two mountains that block its entrance. The underworld is a damp, watery place called "the Swamp," "the Pit," and "Filth." Another of its designations, "isolation ward," is used for a leprosarium in 2 Kings 15:5.

As a group, the gods and goddesses of the Canaanites are larger than life. They travel by giant strides—"a thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step"—and their control over human destiny is absolute. In their personified forms, the deities embody realities beyond human understanding and control: the storms necessary for prosperity and even survival, the powerful drives of sex and violence, the final mystery of death. The gods and goddesses belong to a divine society that mirrors society on earth; for example, both share the patriarchal institution of kingship. The solutions of the problems of that "heavenly city" in their stories gave the Canaanites hope for the future.

POETRY AND LANGUAGE

The language used at Ugarit is closely related to biblical Hebrew as well as to other ancient languages of the region including Phoenician, Aramaic, and Moabite. Like most documents in those languages, these Ugaritic texts were written almost entirely without vowels, as are modern Hebrew and Arabic. This can complicate translation, since a word with only consonants may, at least theoretically, have several possible meanings.

Yet there is a compensating advantage for the translator of Ugaritic: the poetic techniques used by the ancient Canaanite authors have much in common with those employed in the Bible. As in biblical poetry, the chief formal characteristic of Canaanite verse is the use of parallelism, a characteristic not lost in translation. In parallelistic verse, a single idea is expressed in units of two or three lines (a bicolon or a tricolon) by repetition, synonyms, or antonyms, as we see in the following lines:

Let me tell you, Prince Baal,

let me repeat, Rider on the Clouds:

Now, your enemy, Baal,

now you will kill your enemy,

now you will annihilate your foe.

You will take your eternal kingship,

your dominion forever and ever.

These units consist of a tricolon framed by two bicola; each unit has one thought developed by repetitive and synonymous parallelism. Not only the technique but the lines themselves are familiar from the Bible:

Behold, your enemies, Yahweh,

behold, your enemies have perished,

all evildoers have been scattered.

(Ps. 92:9)

Your kingdom is an eternal kingdom,

your rule is forever and ever.

(Ps. 145:13)

This coincidence of style and formula is not surprising, given the shared tradition of Canaanite and Israelite poets: the cultural continuum of ancient Canaan, stretching from northern Syria to the Egyptian border, included not only material objects and language but literary and religious expression as well.

The extensive use of parallelism also clarifies obscurities. Many words in Ugaritic have no apparent cognates in other Semitic languages, and their precise meaning is therefore unknown; synonymous parallelism often provides a possible or even a probable sense. Nevertheless, to a literalminded reader, synonymous parallelism may cause some puzzlement, as in the divine command to Kirta:

Take a lamb in your hand,

a sacrificial lamb in your right hand,

a young animal in both your hands.

A literal reading of this poetic unit might lead readers to think that the hero is to handle three animals at once. But the parallelism is impressionistic, not cumulative, and only one lamb is in question.

The use of numbers in parallelism may also be confusing. The synonym for any number (*x*) is the next higher unit (*x* + 1). The favorite numbers used in this way are three and four, seven and eight, and one thousand and ten thousand; ten thousand is the next unit after one thousand, as in English the next unit after a dozen is a gross. Extended use of this technique is found in Proverbs 30:18-31 and Amos 1:3–2:8, and individual examples in both Ugaritic and biblical poetry are too numerous to catalog here.

Also characteristic of Canaanite poetry is the repetitive use of epithets; such titles are common in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as well. Thus, Baal is often called "the Rider on the Clouds" (compare the designation of Zeus as "the Cloud-gatherer") or "Dagan's son"; Sea, one of Baal's enemies, is given the parallel titles "Prince Sea" and "Judge River"; El is "the Kind, the Compassionate," "the Bull," "the Father of Time," and "the Father of Humanity" (see *Odyssey* 1.28); and Danel is regularly described as "the Hero" and "the man of the Harnamite." There are standard descriptions of banquets and journeys, the saddling of a donkey for riding, the offering of a sacrifice, and the arrival of a deity at El's home. Such often-repeated formulas may strike us as clichés, but we should recall that ancient audiences, whether

Canaanite or Greek, listened rather than read. Repetition organized the narrative for oral audiences, and it also provided a canvas for presenting occasional dramatic departure from expected norms of storytelling.

We also find common motifs, one of which is the measurement of time in periods of seven days or seven years. This occurs five times in *Aqhat*, as well as elsewhere in the texts translated here. The precise significance of this usage is still not known. One application of the seven-year formula is to alternating periods of plenty and famine, as in Pharaoh's dream in the biblical story of Joseph (Gen. 41:26–32); the same motif is found in Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources. In our texts, Baal's victory over Death extended for seven years, during which the land was productive. Throughout a corresponding seven-year cycle the forces of sterility prevailed over the storm god, as Danel's curse implies:

For seven years let Baal fail,

eight, the Rider on the Clouds:

No dew, no showers,

no surging of the two seas,

no benefit of Baal's voice.

For the alternation of famine and plenty the entire seven-year period was significant; in other instances the emphasis is on the seventh day or year. Thus, it was on the seventh day of Danel's incubation rite in the temple that Baal interceded for him and El blessed him, just as it was on the seventh day that God called to Moses on the cloud-covered mountain (Exod. 24:16). Similarly, only on the seventh day of the Kotharats' ritual in *Aqhat* did Danel and his wife succeed in conceiving a son; one of the themes of the first account of creation in the Bible is the importance of the seventh day, the Sabbath; and, in a final dramatic example, the fall of Jericho occurred on the seventh day after seven priests with seven trumpets marched seven times around the city (Josh. 6:12–20).

Seven days is the standard length of a journey (*Kirta*, tablet 1; Gen. 31:23) and of a wedding feast (Judg. 14:12); the firing of Baal's palace takes a week as well. In these and other examples it is difficult to see more than literary convention in the choice of seven. But the alteration of the traditional mourning period from seven days (as in Job 2:13) to seven years after Aqhat's murder heightens the connections between Danel's son and the powers of fertility. Thus, in some cases we can agree with the observation that a period of seven days or years is "a time of great potency and fateful in its meaning" (H.-J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966], 86).

As this examination of parallelism, epithets, and formulas illustrates, ancient Semitic poets, whether Ugaritic or Israelite, were conservative. Traditional techniques and motifs were preserved, with modifications, for at least a millennium. But the Israelites' indebtedness to their Canaanite predecessors was not merely linguistic and literary.

UGARIT AND ANCIENT ISRAEL

Until the discovery of Ugarit, the sources for the study of the religion of ancient Canaan were both sketchy and late. There were distorted and fragmentary accounts in classical Greek and Roman authors and in some early Christian apologists; there were also dedicatory and funerary inscriptions of the Phoenicians and of their Punic cousins in western North Africa. But even when this literary evidence was synthesized with archaeological remains—the figurines and statues, the temples and shrines—it was impossible to reconstruct a coherent account of what the Canaanites believed.

The Bible contains many direct references to Canaanite religious beliefs and practices; not surprisingly, they are almost uniformly hostile and thus are presumably unreliable. Now, with the discovery of Ugarit and its thousands of texts, we have an extensive and primary source for the study of Canaanite religion, and with it we can reinterpret the biblical evidence concerning the Canaanites. At the same time we can deepen our understanding of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, for the Ugaritic tablets are the best available witness to the background from which the religion of ancient Israel emerged, and to the Canaanite beliefs that it shared, adopted, compromised with, and sometimes rejected.

One way to illuminate this relationship between Ugarit and Israel is to return to the principal Canaanite deities and to examine their biblical analogues. The head of the pantheon, El, also appears in the Bible. His name (and its variant Elohim) is generally used as a term for God, but in a few passages it serves as a proper name. Thus, Psalm 82 begins:

God [*Elohim*] has taken his place in the

Assembly of El,

in the midst of the gods [*elohim*] he

holds judgment.

Similarly, Isaiah 14:13 (although in a polemical context) speaks of the "stars of El," and Deuteronomy 32:8 (following the reading of a Dead Sea scroll and the Greek text) of the "sons of El." In Exodus 6:2–3 a distinction is made between earlier and later names of the god of Israel:

> **God [*Elohim*] spoke to Moses, and he said to him: "I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shadday, but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them."**

The title "El Shadday," often erroneously translated "God Almighty," means "El of the Mountain" or "El, the One of the Mountain." As we have seen, El lived on a mountain, the "cosmic mountain," that was the source of fresh water and the seat of the divine Assembly, and the biblical epithet reflects this mythology. Moreover, like El, the god of Israel presided over the assembly of the gods, as in 1 Kings 22:19 and Job 1–2.

Other titles of El in the Ugaritic texts also have echoes in the Bible. Thus, in Genesis 21:33, Yahweh is styled "El, the Eternal One," reminding us of El's title "the Father of Time"; the phrase "the Mighty One of Jacob" (Gen. 49:24, etc.) should probably be rendered "the Bull of Jacob," recalling El's identification as "the Bull"; and the liturgical phrase "Yahweh, Yahweh, a merciful and gracious god [*el*], slow to anger and quick to forgive" (Exod. 34:6, etc.), is a variant of "El the Kind, the Compassionate."

The popularity of the worship of Baal in Israel is illustrated both by repeated attacks on it by biblical writers and by the use of Baal as an element in personal names; among others, Saul and David gave their children names containing Baal (an example is Baalyada, meaning "Baal knows"). One reason for Baal's appeal to the Israelites is that many of Yahweh's characteristics and much of the language used to describe him were derived from his Canaanite rival. Both are called "Rider on the Clouds" (Yahweh in Ps. 68:4), and some commentators have suggested that Psalm 29 was originally a hymn to Baal; its language is in any case strikingly familiar to a reader of the *Baal* cycle. Like Baal, Yahweh was the victorious warrior who had shown his mastery over the sea; like Baal, Yahweh revealed himself on a mountain in the midst of a storm; like Baal, Yahweh had a temple built of cedar. In the light of Canaanite religion, the character of the god of Israel looks like a composite: Yahweh displays many of the images and formulas associated with both El and Baal.

Associations of El and Baal likewise influenced the motif of the mountain where Yahweh revealed himself. The primary mountain of revelation was Sinai; when Yahweh appeared,

> **there was thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud on the mountain. . . . And Mount Sinai was covered with smoke,**

because Yahweh had descended upon it in fire. . . . And the whole mountain trembled violently.

(Exod. 19:16–18)

The same imagery is used of Baal's theophany:

Then Baal opened a break in the clouds,

Baal sounded his holy voice,

Baal thundered from his lips . . .

the earth's high places shook.

The association of Yahweh as storm god with the mountain of revelation is echoed in Judges 5:4–5:

Yahweh, when you set out from Seir,

when you marched from the field of Edom,

the earth quaked,

and the heavens shook,

and the clouds shook water;

the mountains shuddered before Yahweh, the one

of Sinai,

before Yahweh, the god of Israel.

The other mountain central to Israel's theology was Mount Zion. Jerusalem had been a center of El worship, as Genesis 14:18–24 illustrates: there Melchizedek was a priest of El Most High (El Elyon). Like the mountain of El in the Ugaritic texts, Zion was, especially in apocalyptic vision, the source of fresh water:

> **On that day living waters will go out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea, half of them to the western sea, both in summer and in winter.**
>
> **(Zech. 14:8)**

This theme recurs in Ezekiel 47:1–12, Joel 3:17–18, and Revelation 22:1–2.

But just as elements associated with El and Baal blended in the worship of Yahweh, so too Zion and Sinai became identified:

Out of Zion, perfect in beauty,

God shines forth. . . .

before him is a consuming fire,

around him a storm rages.

(Ps. 50:2–3)

Zion likewise assumed the characteristics of the storm god's home:

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,

is the joy of the whole earth;

Mount Zion, in the recesses of Zaphon,

is the city of the great king.

(Ps. 48:2–3)

The descriptions of Zion thus include associations with Baal and El.

Turning to other deities, we find traces of Anat, Asherah, and Astarte in the Bible. Anat is the least well attested, occurring only in the place names Beth-anath and Anathoth and in the personal name Shamgar Ben-Anath. In the Bible, most scholars detect the goddess Asherah in 2 Kings 21:7 and 23:4, 6–7. In biblical Hebrew the word *asherah* is also a common noun, meaning a sacred tree or pole used in the goddess's worship; it was probably a fertility symbol. In this capacity, the asherah, arguably the symbol of the goddess by the same name, is implicitly associated with Yahweh, as the fertility god par excellence. The Bible prohibits this form of worship of Yahweh: "You shall not set up an asherah of any wood next to the altar of Yahweh your god" (Deut. 16:21). Because of its disapproval of asherah, the Bible sometimes associates her name with the god considered to be the divine epitome of idolatry, Baal himself (1 Kgs. 18:19). Astarte occurs in the Bible with some frequency, but, as in extant Ugaritic sources, little light is shed on her personality. She is called "the goddess" or "the abomination of the Sidonians" (see 1 Kgs. 11:5).

The deity Death is only occasionally mentioned in the Bible. As in the Ugaritic texts, his appetite is proverbial and his presence life-threatening (Jer. 9:21). His home in the underworld is a palace fitted with gates (Job 38:17). In Isaiah 25:8, it is said that at the eschatological victory banquet Yahweh "will swallow up Death forever"; this is a reversal of the scene in Baal when the storm god goes down into Death's mouth, to be crushed like a kid in his jaws.

As this brief overview has shown, Canaanite motifs permeate the Bible. Most significant is the fusion of Baal language and El

language in the descriptions of Yahweh and his activity: the god of Israel may be unique, but the formulas that Israel used to express its understanding of him were not. The more we learn of the cultural context in which the Israelites lived, the more the prophetic remark rings true:

By origin and by birth you are of the land of the Canaanites.

(Ezek. 16:3)

A NOTE ON THIS TRANSLATION

Our intention has been to provide a readable translation unencumbered by the usual scholarly apparatus and commentary. We have therefore not thought it necessary to note all omissions and reconstructions. Nevertheless, because of the fragmentary state of most of the tablets, it has been unavoidable to use three spaced periods to indicate a gap of several words. In offering some comments in smaller font, we have indicated missing lines so that readers have a sense of the damage that the tablets have incurred. We have also provided tablet and column headings as well as line numbers (for every fifth line) so that the nature of the tablets might be clearer even through the medium of a modern translation. For the reader's convenience, at the end of this book is a glossary of most proper names and titles appearing in the stories. For proper names that occur in the Bible, we have used the conventional English renderings in the

translations, and given the likely Ugaritic vocalizations in the glossary. More detailed expositions of the myths and their principal characters can be found in readings suggested below.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

A summary of the archaeology of Ugarit is Marguerite Yon, *The City of Ugarit on the Tell of Ras Shamra* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006). The texts and literature are summarized by Dennis Pardee and Pierre Bordreuil, "Ugarit: Texts and Literature," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 6 ([New York: Doubleday, 1992], 706–21) and by Wayne T. Pitard, "Canaanite Literature," in *From an Antique Land: An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, ed. Carl S. Ehrlich ([Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009], 255–311). All aspects of ancient Ugarit are addressed by *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Readers interested in the history of Ugaritic and biblical studies may consult Mark S. Smith, *Untold Stories: The Bible and Ugaritic Studies in the Twentieth Century* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

More detailed treatments may be found in the following:

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Carol J. L. Kloos, *Yhwh's Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot; Leiden: Brill, 1986).

Marjo C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1989).

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John L. McLaughlin, *The marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2001).

Patrick D. Miller Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

Michael Patrick O'Connor, "The Human Characters' Names in the Ugaritic Poems: Onomastic Eccentricity in Bronze-Age Semitic and the Name Daniel in Particular," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Magnes; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 269–83.

Hugh R. Page Jr., *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

Simon B. Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition: Essays on the Ugaritic Poems* Keret *and* Aqhat (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1989).

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David P. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of* Aqhat (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

The annual *Ugarit-Forschungen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969–) contains technical articles in French, German, and English on all aspects of the Ugaritic material.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The standard critical edition of the alphabetic texts from Ras Shamra is Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joachín Sanmartín, eds. *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (KTU)*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997); a revision of this volume is planned. Of the texts translated here, *Baal* is Nos. 1.1 to 1.6 in *KTU*, *Kirta* is Nos. 1.14 to 1.16, *Aqhat* is Nos. 1.17 to 1.19, *The Rephaim* is Nos. 1.20 to 1.22, *The Lovely Gods* is No. 1.23, and *El's Drinking Party* is No. 1.114.

The field benefits from the important work of Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joachin Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 2 vols., trans. W. G. E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2003). A third edition is in preparation.

The field also profits from several grammars produced within the last decade. The most comprehensive is Josef Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), which may be studied in conjunction with the massive 2005 review by Dennis Pardee, "Online- Version von Rezension von J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (AOAT 273), Ugarit-Verlag, Münster 2000," *Archiv für Orientforschung* Web site: http://orientalistik.univie.ac.at/en/publikationen/archiv-fuer-orientforschung-engl/#c125159. In addition, grammatical works of use to beginning students include Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Daniel Sivan, *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); and William M. Schniedewind and Joel H. Hunt, *A Primer on Ugaritic: Language, Culture, and Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Each has its own strengths: the first offers with its grammatical précis wonderful transcriptions and photographs of the tablets to be studied (on a CD-ROM); the second provides many connections between Ugaritic and biblical Hebrew; and the third gives useful,

introductory information about the site and the ancient culture of Ugarit.

The following critical translations and studies have been of invaluable help in the preparation of this volume. Several of these works contain bibliographical resources as well as critical notes.

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Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, 2nd ed. (Staten Island, NY: Gordian Press, 1975).

H. L. Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 129–55.

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_____, *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23: Royal Constructions of Opposition, Intersection, Integration, and Domination* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006).

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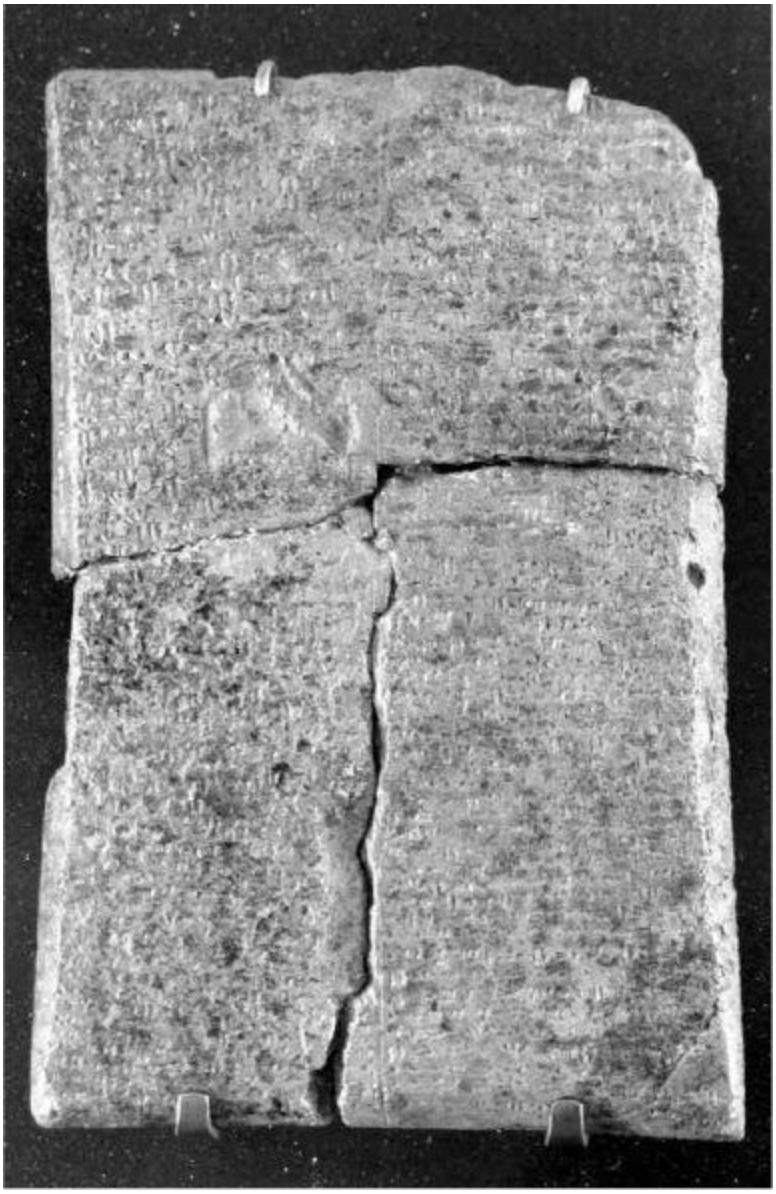


***Reverse side of Tablet 3 of* Aqhat *(KTU 1.19); it is about 6.5 inches (17 cm) high.* (Fouilles C. Schaeffer, 1931/Photographer: Rama. With permission. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Danel_epic_AO17323_img_0160.jpg.)**

AQHAT

INTRODUCTION

You are wiser than Danel,

no secret is hidden from you.

(Ezek. 28:3)

With these words the sixth-century BCE Israelite prophet satirized his contemporary, the king of Tyre. The Danel or (as traditionally pronounced) Daniel in question, also mentioned together with Noah and Job in Ezekiel 14, was generally

identified with the legendary hero of the biblical book of Daniel until the discovery of the Ugaritic texts. But the spelling of the name in the Hebrew text, its date, and its context make it clear that the Daniel referred to by Ezekiel is the Canaanite hero, the father of Aqhat.

The three fragmentary tablets from Ras Shamra that deal with Danel and his son do not, unfortunately, illustrate his proverbial wisdom. Yet in a formulaic passage occurring twice in the surviving texts, Danel is described as sitting at the entrance to the city gate, presiding over legal cases involving widows and orphans. His very name contains the verb meaning "to adjudicate," which would have evoked this typical role as judge. This was the ordinary task of elders and rulers in ancient Near Eastern societies: by protecting the most powerless members of society they demonstrated their own wisdom and power. This idea of justice is also used by King Hammurabi of Babylon in the epilogue to his famous Code, and the failure to keep this ideal is an important part of the story of King Kirta. The same image of sitting with the mighty in the gate also appears in Proverbs 31:23 and other biblical texts.

As the first tablet begins, the leader Danel is in a temple performing a special rite called incubation. This form of communication with deities through dreams was considered an effective way of contact with a divine power, as shown by the biblical parallels involving Samuel (1 Sam. 3:2–9) and Solomon (1 Kgs. 3:5–15). The specific reason for Danel's vigil is revealed when, on the seventh day, his patron god Baal interceded for him with El, the head of the pantheon: Danel had no son and heir. The focus of the story from its beginning is thus on Danel's son and not on Danel; this is confirmed by the title, "Belonging to *Aqhat*" at the beginning of the third tablet of the cycle. We learn later that Danel did have a daughter, Pugat, but for the ancient Canaanites (as in many other societies) a son was the desired

offspring. “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth; happy is the man whose has filled his quiver with them” (Ps. 127:4–5).

After a repeated catalog of the duties of a son, El promised that Danel would father one. Danel returned to his palace, where, with the accompanying ministrations of the Kotharat, goddesses of marriage and childbirth, a son was conceived by Danel’s wife, Danataya. Her name echoes his own and suggests that she is a companion corresponding to him (cf. Gen. 2:18). At this point in the story there is a break amounting to about a third of the first tablet.

The story resumes with a visit of Kothar-wa-Hasis, the Canaanite Hephaestus, to Danel. In typical ancient fashion a feast was prepared in his honor, and he presented Danel with a bow and arrows; Danel gave them to his son Aqhat. Weapons from the divine craftsman were wonderful objects—like the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*—and so it is little surprise that Anat, the goddess of war and the hunt, was envious of Aqhat’s weapons. She offered him gold and silver for the bow and arrows, which he refused, and finally she promised him the ultimate gift, immortality. Aqhat rejected this bribe in less than conciliatory terms, asserting that despite the goddess’s promises, death awaited him, as it does every mortal. He rashly went on to insult Anat, denying her hunting ability.

This interaction between Aqhat and Anat is reminiscent of a scene involving the Mesopotamian hero Gilgamesh and the goddess Ishtar. In the Gilgamesh epic, several fragments of which have been found at Ugarit, the goddess attempted to seduce the hero, but he rejected her advances and added to the insult by listing her previous lovers and their unhappy fates. Like Anat, Ishtar complained to her father, the head of the pantheon; like

Anat, she sought revenge by means of an animal. Furthermore, Anu, the father of the gods, warned Ishtar of the consequences of her revenge: "If I do what you ask, there will be seven years of barren husks"; similarly, a drought of seven years followed the death of Aqhat. These close parallels have prompted the suggestion that Anat was after more than Aqhat's bow, that the bow was a symbol of the hero's masculinity. Though not necessarily a direct symbol, the weapon opens the way for Aqhat's first hunt, and in this context is a token of Aqhat's transition to male adulthood. The bow in its use for the hunt serves as the occasion for Anat's proposal to Aqhat, and the later falling of the bow into the sea parallels the hero's death. The parallels are also an example of how ancient Mediterranean literatures—both Near Eastern and Greco-Roman—shared the same motifs.

With El acquiescing to her desire for revenge, Anat proceeded to kill Aqhat through the agency of her henchman Yatpan. Both assumed the form of birds—the Greek goddess Athena frequently appeared as a bird—and Yatpan descended upon Aqhat while he was eating: "He struck him twice on the skull, three times over the ear." Yatpan's name may come from a word that means "to tear out," which would fit his role in the story.

The consequences of Aqhat's death were catastrophic: the crops immediately died. Vultures hovered over Danel's house, a sure sign of death. Even before they knew the identity of the dead person, Danel and his daughter Pugat began to mourn. Danel's lament over his son included the wish that there be "no dew, no showers, . . . no benefit of Baal's voice," recalling David's moving words of mourning for the dead Saul and Jonathan: "Hills of Gilboa, no dew, no rain on you" (2 Sam. 1:21). Danel then toured his parched fields, ironically wishing that Aqhat, still alive as far as he knew, could harvest the once-abundant crops. On his

return, messengers brought the news of Aqhat's murder. Anxious to give his son a proper burial, Danel searched the innards of the vultures for undigested fat and bone and, having found them, buried what was left of Aqhat. His name has been thought to mean "most obedient," which would signal his model behavior; his name may have a further association, "to gather," a poignant meaning especially at this point in the story, when his father gathered his remains for burial. Danel then cursed the three cities near the scene of the crime. The names of the first two, Qor-maym and Mararat-tagullal-banir, may be translated "source of water" and "(the place of) the date-palm that produces dates." The curses were to bring sterility to these places, whose names suggest their fertility. Finally, Danel officially began the seven-year period of mourning. At its end, signaled by the offering of sacrifice, Pugat asked for her father's blessing so that she might avenge her brother's death.

The figure of Pugat is an attractive one. Her name is a common Ugaritic noun for "girl," and she certainly fits the ancient ideal for girls. She is repeatedly described as follows:

She who carries water,

she who collects dew on her hair,

she who knows the course of the stars.

These expressions represent her as an industrious housemaid—an ancient Cinderella fetching water while the stars were still

visible, her hair dampened by the heavy dew (cf. the story of the dew and the fleece in Judg. 7:36–40). To us this activity might seem unsuited to a leader's daughter, but the ancient Semites thought otherwise. Kirta's daughter Thitmanit, herself a princess, met her brother as she was on her way to draw water at dusk. Likewise, the "valiant woman" of Proverbs 31, even though she is mistress of a large household, "rises while it is still night" to secure enough food for the day. We may also compare Anat's washing in the dew and rain of the stars, following her first battle in *Baal;* the similarity of these two female characters is further evident in the final scene of *Aqhat*.

Like the Jewish heroine Judith, Pugat applied cosmetics and put on her robe, but under it she concealed a dagger. Having arrived at Yatpan's camp, she managed to get him drunk, and in his cups he boasted of his murder of Aqhat. The tablet breaks off here, but it is probable that Pugat eventually killed Yatpan, if we can rely on Canaanite and Egyptian parallels in which a sister avenged her brother's violent death. In *Baal* it was Anat herself who seized and dismembered Baal's adversary Death, scattering his remains in the fields. Similarly, in Egyptian myth, after Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth, his wife and sister Isis retrieved his body, buried it, and aided their son Horus to avenge his father.

The coincidence of themes here—the deaths of Baal, Osiris, and Aqhat as threats to fertility, and the bodies of Death, Osiris, and Aqhat all dismembered—suggests one level of interpretation for *Aqhat*. Nearly every Ugaritic text translated here has to do with fertility in some way, and *Aqhat* is no exception. Just as Baal's subjection to Death resulted in drought, so a drought followed Aqhat's murder. Danel is certainly concerned for the dead in *The Rephaim*, where he also appears, and the *Aqhat* cycle may have continued with Aqhat's restoration to life and the consequent return of fertility to the fields. A leader was vital to

continued agricultural prosperity. The story of Kirta indicates this, for when he became ill, the farmers noted that

Used up was the food from their bins,

used up was the wine from their skins,

used up was the oil from their vats.

But despite an obvious relationship to the themes of *Baal* and *Kirta,* the emphasis in *Aqhat* is not on fertility alone. Rather, as far as we can judge from the fragmentary state of the tablets, we have a complex saga depicting life as it was recalled in days of long ago. Concern with fertility is part of this picture, but only part. In one scene after another, the virtuous leader, the strong yet rash son, and the dutiful daughter are sketched as heroic models or as a warning to would-be warriors or leaders. And behind these portraits lies the world of the gods and goddesses, who dealt with humans face to face in those days—often capriciously, but with important consequences. We do not know in what context *Aqhat* was originally composed. Perhaps by the time it was transcribed by Ilimilku the cycle was simply literature recited for its own sake, preserved because it was, in the end, a good story.

Aqhat

TABLET 1

Column 1

About ten lines are missing. The first line would have included the scribal title for the series of tablets about Aqhat: "Belonging to *Aqhat.*"

The opening scene introduces Danel as "the man of Rapau," the first of the Rephaim (or Rapauma), the divinized, deceased ancestors of the Ugaritic royal house. He is also the Harnamite, a title perhaps derived from a place name, Harnam. Danel is in a temple, where he is making offerings to the divine Assembly in hope of gaining the deities' favor.

Then Danel, the man of Rapau,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

girded, he gave the gods food,

girded, he gave the holy ones drink.

He cast off his cloak and lay down,

put off his garment and spent the night.

One day passed, and on the second

girded, Danel gave to the gods,

girded, he gave the gods food,

girded, he gave the holy ones drink.

A third day passed, and on the fourth

girded, Danel gave to the gods,

girded, he gave the gods food,

girded, he gave the holy ones drink.

A fifth day passed, and on the sixth

girded, Danel gave to the gods,

girded, he gave the gods food,

girded, he gave the holy ones drink.

Danel cast off his cloak,

cast off his cloak and lay down,

15put off his garment and spent the night.

Then, on the seventh day,

Baal approached with his compassion:

“Danel, the man of Rapau, laments,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite, moans:

For he has no son as his brothers do,

no heir like his kinsmen;

20unlike his brothers, he has no son,

nor an heir, like his kinsmen.

Girded, he has given the gods food,

girded, he has given the holy ones drink.

So, my father, El the Bull, bless him,

Creator of Creatures, show him your favor.

Let him have a son in his house,

an heir inside his palace,

to set up a stela for his divine ancestor,

a votive marker for his clan in the sanctuary;

to send his incense up from the earth,

the song of his burial place from the dust;

to shut the jaws of his abusers,

to drive off his oppressors;

to hold his hand when he is drunk,

to support him when he is full of wine;

to eat his grain-offering in the temple of Baal,

his portion in the temple of El;

to patch his roof when it gets muddy,

to wash his clothes when they get dirty.”

El took care of his servant,

35he blessed Danel, the man of Rapau,

he showed favor to the Hero, the man of the Harnamite:

“With passion may Danel, the man of Rapau, live,

with desire the Hero, the man of the Harnamite.

Let him go up to his bed:

As he kisses his wife, she’ll become pregnant,

40as he embraces her, she’ll conceive;

She will become pregnant,

she will conceive;

and there will be a son in his house,

an heir inside his palace;

to set up a stela for his divine ancestor,

45a votive marker for his clan in the sanctuary,

to send his incense up from the earth,

the song of his burial place from the dust;

to shut the jaws of his abusers,

to drive off his oppressors . . .”

About twenty lines are missing. They include El listing the remainder of the duties of the son to his father, and presumably the announcement of the pregnancy of Danel’s wife. To judge from the beginning of the next column, this pronouncement by El is then delivered to Danel by another deity, perhaps Baal or a divine messenger. When the column resumes, we are in the middle of El’s speech being relayed to Danel.

Column 2

1. . . to set up a stela for his divine ancestor,

a votive marker for his clan in the sanctuary;

to send his incense up from the earth,

the song of his burial place from the dust;

to shut the jaws of his abusers,

to drive off his oppressors;

to hold his hand when he is drunk,

to support him when he is full of wine;

to eat his grain-offering in the temple of Baal,

his portion in the temple of El;

to patch his roof when it gets muddy,

to wash his clothes when they get dirty.”

Danel’s face lit up in joy,

and above his countenance shone.

His brow relaxed and he laughed,

he put his feet on a stool,

he raised his voice and declared:

“Now I can sit back and relax;

my heart inside me can relax;

for a son will be born to me like my brothers,

an heir, like my kinsmen,

to set up a stela for my divine ancestor,

a votive marker for my clan in the sanctuary;

to send my incense up from the earth,

the song of my burial place from the dust;

to shut the jaws of my abusers,

to drive off my oppressors;

to hold my hand when I am drunk,

to support me when I am full of wine;

to eat my grain-offering in the temple of Baal,

my portion in the temple of El;

to patch my roof when it gets muddy,

to wash my clothes when they get dirty.”

Danel arrived at his house,

Danel reached his palace.

The Kotharat entered his house,

Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon.

Then Danel, the man of Rapau,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

slaughtered an ox for the Kotharat,

he gave food to the Kotharat,

drink to the Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon.

One day had ended, and on the second

he gave food to the Kotharat,

drink to the Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon.

Three days had ended, and on the fourth

he gave food to the Kotharat,

drink to the Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon.

Five days had ended, and on the sixth

he gave food to the Kotharat,

drink to Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon.

Then, on the seventh day,

40the Kotharat left his house,

the Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon . . .

. . . the pleasures of the bed,

. . . the delights of the bed…

Danel sat and counted the months. . .

Three partially broken lines follow, which include words suggesting the counting of months of pregnancy. About ten further lines are missing.

Columns 3 and 4

These are completely missing. From events later in the story, it is clear that Danel's wife gives birth to Aqhat.

Column 5

About eleven lines are missing. These or perhaps some part of columns 3 and 4 contain information about the bow mentioned in this column.

“I’ll bring a bow there,

I’ll provide the arrows.”

And then, on the seventh day,

Danel, the man of Rapau,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

got up and sat at the entrance to the gate,

among the leaders on the threshing floor.

He judged the cases of widows,

presided over orphans’ hearings.

Then he raised his eyes and looked:

a thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step,

he saw Kothar coming,

he saw Hasis approaching.

Look!—he was bringing a bow,

look!—he was bearing arrows.

Then Danel, the man of Rapau,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

called to his wife:

“Listen, Lady Danataya:

Prepare a lamb from the flock

for Kothar-wa-Hasis’s appetite,

for the desire of the Skillful Craftsman.

Give food and drink to the god;

serve and honor him,

the lord of Egypt, the god of it all.”

Lady Danataya obeyed;

she prepared a lamb from the flock

for Kothar-wa-Hasis’s appetite,

for the desire of the Skillful Craftsman.

After Kothar-wa-Hasis had arrived,

he put the bow in Danel's hands,

he set the arrows on his knees.

Then Lady Danataya gave food and drink to the god;

she served and honored him,

the lord of Egypt, the god of it all.

Kothar left for his tent,

the Skillful One for his home.

Then Danel, the man of Rapau,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

. . . the bow . . . to Aqhat . . . :

"The best of your hunt, my son,

the best of your hunt,

. . . hunt in the temple . . ."

From the damaged lines 35–39, it seems that Danel bids his son to take up the traditionally male activity of hunting. Aqhat is apparently instructed by his father to bring the prey that he hunts to the temple, presumably for an offering. About another twenty lines are missing.

Column 6

The first fifteen lines are badly damaged. They include customary clichés for feasting, which suggest Anat eating and drinking, followed by her seeing Aqhat. From the mention of feasting in column 6, lines 4–6, and the later mention of the goddess, it would appear that Anat, as a goddess of hunting, is present at the feast that Aqhat furnishes with "the best of the hunt," mentioned in column 5, as commanded by his father. The clear section of column 6 opens with Anat threatening Aqhat.

15**She poured her cup on the ground,**

she raised her voice and declared:

"Listen, Aqhat the Hero:

Ask for silver, and I'll give it to you,

for gold—I'll make it yours.

But give your bow to Anat,

let the Mistress of the Peoples have your arrows."

But Aqhat the Hero replied:

“The strongest ash trees from the Lebanon,

the strongest sinews from wild oxen,

the strongest horns from mountain goats,

the strongest tendons from the hocks of a bull,

the strongest reeds from the vast marshes:

Give them to Kothar-wa-Hasis,

so he can make a bow for Anat,

arrows for the Mistress of the Peoples.”

But Maiden Anat replied:

“Ask for eternal life, Aqhat the Hero;

ask for eternal life, and I’ll give it to you,

immortality—I’ll make it yours.

I’ll make you able to match years with Baal,

months with the sons of El.

For Baal, when he gives life, makes a feast,

he makes a feast for the life-given, and gives him drink;

he sings a song in his honor,

a pleasant refrain for him.

So will I give life to Aqhat the Hero.”

But Aqhat the Hero replied:

“Don’t lie to me, Maiden;

for to a hero your lies are filth.

A mortal—what does he get in the end?

What does a mortal finally get?

Glaze poured on his head,

lime on top of his skull.

As every man dies, I will die;

yes, I too will surely die.

And I have something else to tell you:

Bows are for warriors—

do women ever hunt?”

Anat laughed aloud,

but in her heart she plotted:

“Listen to me, Aqhat the Hero,

listen to me while I speak:

If I meet you on the path of rebellion,

. . . on the proud path,

I’ll make you fall under my feet,

you pretty-boy, he-man.”

She stamped her feet and left the earth;

then she headed for El,

at the source of the two rivers,

in the midst of the channels of the two seas.

She came to the encampment of El and entered

the tent of the King, the Father of Time.

50At El's feet she bowed and lowered herself,

she prostrated herself and honored him.

Then she maligned Aqhat, the Hero,

she slandered the child of Danel, the man of Rapau.

The last three lines are broken; they contain verbs for speaking, presumably introducing Anat's denunciation of Aqhat. Another twenty lines are missing, which would have included more of the conversation between Anat and El; it continues in the next tablet. On the left side of the column is part of a colophon that would have read "Scribe: Ilimilku from Shuban, the student of Attanu the diviner."

TABLET 2

Column 1

The first five lines are damaged beyond reconstruction. Lines 6–11 are also damaged but can be made out, thanks to a parallel passage in the Baal cycle (tablet 3, column 5).

And Maiden Anat replied:

“Don’t rejoice in your well-built house,

in your well-built house, El,

don’t rejoice in the height of your palace:

don’t rely on them!

I’ll smash your head,

I’ll make your gray hair run with blood,

your gray beard with gore;

then you may call to Aqhat—he can rescue you;

to the son of Danel—he can save you

from the hand of Maiden Anat!”

But El the Kind, the Compassionate, replied:

“I know you, daughter, how angry you can be;

among goddesses there is no restraining you.

Leave, my unscrupulous daughter;

you will store it up inside you,

set your heart on whatever you desire;

whoever resists you will be crushed.”

20Maiden Anat left;

she headed to Aqhat the Hero,

a thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step.

And Maiden Anat laughed;

she raised her voice and declared:

“Listen, Aqhat the Hero:

You are my brother and I . . . .”

Lines 24–34 are too damaged to translate. From some of the surviving words, it seems that Anat tells Aqhat about hunting and about Abiluma, perhaps where he should go hunting. About twenty lines are missing from the bottom of the column, as are the two next two columns; these perhaps detail the goddess’s preparations for her attack on him.

Columns 2 and 3

These columns are lost.

Column 4

Lines 1–4 are too damaged to translate.

5Maiden Anat left,

she headed to Yatpan, the Lady’s Warrior.

She raised her voice and declared:

“Let Yatpan turn . . . to the town of Abiluma,

Abiluma, the town of Prince Moon.”

Lines 9–11 are very damaged and their meaning is unclear.

Yatpan, the Lady’s Warrior, replied:

“Listen, Maiden Anat:

You are the one who would strike him for his bow,

for his arrows not let him live.

Pretty-boy, the Hero, has fixed a meal;

he is all alone in the encampment. . . .”

Maiden Anat replied:

“Pay attention, Yatpan; I give the orders.

I’ll put you in my pouch like a vulture,

in my bag like a bird.

As Aqhat sits down to eat,

the son of Danel to his meal,

vultures will be hovering above him,

a flock of birds will be watching.

I’ll be hovering among the vultures,

I’ll set you over Aqhat:

strike him twice on the skull,

three times over the ear;

make his blood run like a butcher,

run to his knees like a slaughterer.

25His breath will go out like wind,

his spirit like a breeze,

like smoke from his nostrils. . . .

I won’t let him live!”

She took Yatpan, the Lady’s Warrior,

she put him in her pouch like a hawk,

in her bag like a bird.

30As Aqhat sat down to eat,

the son of Danel to his meal,

vultures hovered over him,

a flock of birds watched.

Among the vultures hovered Anat;

she set him over Aqhat.

He struck him twice on the skull,

three times over the ear;

35he made his blood run like a slaughterer,

run to his knees like a butcher.

His breath went out like wind,

his spirit like a breeze,

like smoke, from his nostrils. . . .

And she wept . . .

40“For your bow I struck you,

for your arrows I did not let you live.”

Lines 37–42 are badly damaged, and many of the words cannot be read. It seems that Anat laments her murder of Aqhat.

TABLET 3

Column 1

1Belonging to *Aqhat*

Lines 2–13 are badly damaged. There is an initial comment about the bow in lines 2–5 and how it was lost. Following mention of Anat's name, the next two lines mention a musical instrument, perhaps to accompany her mourning for Aqhat or to express a metaphor for Anat mistreating his remains.

. . . into the water it fell . . .

5 the bow was broken. . . .

Maiden Anat . . .

Her hand . . .

like a singer with a lyre at his fingers;

for she cut the stones of his mouth,

she tore out his teeth . . .

"For his staff I struck him;

15I struck him only for his bow,

for his arrows I did not let him live.

Yet his bow has not become mine,

and in death . . .

The first fruits of summer have withered,

the ear in its husk.”

Then Danel, the man of Rapau,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

got up and sat at the entrance to the gate,

among the leaders on the threshing floor.

He judged the cases of widows,

presided over orphans’ hearings. . . .

Lines 25–28 are too damaged to translate. The text resumes with a description of Danel’s daughter, Pugat.

She raised her eyes and looked:

On the threshing floor the greenery had dried,

it drooped, it had withered.

Over her father’s house vultures hovered,

a flock of birds watched.

Pugat wept in her heart,

she cried inwardly.

She tore the clothes of Danel, the man of Rapau,

the garment of the Hero, the man of the Harnamite.

Then Danel, the man of Rapau,

cursed the clouds in the awful heat,

the rain of the clouds that falls in late summer,

the dew that drops on the grapes:

“For seven years let Baal fail,

eight, the Rider on the Clouds:

No dew, no showers,

no surging of the two seas,

no benefit of Baal’s voice.

For the clothes of Danel, the man of Rapau, have been torn,

the garment of the Hero, the man of the Harnamite.”

Danel called to his daughter:

Column 2

“Listen, Pugat:

You who carry water,

you who collect dew on your hair,

you who know the course of the stars:

Saddle an ass, harness a donkey;

attach my silver reins, my golden bridle.”

Pugat obeyed,

she who carries water,

who collects dew on her hair,

who knows the course of the stars.

In tears she saddled the ass,

in tears she harnessed the donkey,

in tears she lifted her father,

she put him on the ass’s back,

on the beautiful back of the donkey.

Danel went around his dried land;

he saw a stalk in the dried land,

he saw a stalk in the languishing land.

He embraced the stalk and kissed it:

“I pray the stalk could grow,

in the dried land the stalk could grow,

the plant in the languishing land;

the hand of Aqhat the Hero would harvest you,

place you in the granary.”

Danel went around the consumed land;

he saw an ear growing in the consumed land,

an ear growing in the scorched land.

He embraced the ear and kissed it:

“I pray the ear could grow in the consumed land,

the plant in the scorched land;

the hand of Aqhat the Hero would harvest you,

25place you in the granary.”

These words had just come from his mouth,

this speech from his lips,

when she raised her eyes and looked:

. . . two lads were coming . . .

“He was struck twice on the skull,

three times over the ear . . .”

Tears poured like quarter-shekels . . .

Lines 28–36 are badly damaged. The words that are preserved seem to refer to the announcement of Aqhat’s death.

“I have news for you, Danel

. . . beneath Anat he fell;

she would not raise him up.

She made his breath go out like wind,

his spirit like a breeze,

like smoke, from his nostrils.”

40They arrived, raised their voices and declared:

“Listen, Danel, the man of Rapau:

Aqhat the Hero is dead.

Maiden Anat made his breath go out like wind,

his spirit like a breeze.”

45His feet shook,

his face broke out in sweat,

his back convulsed,

his joints trembled,

his vertebrae weakened.

He raised his voice and declared: . . .

Lines 50–55 are missing; these would have provided Danel's response to the news of his son's death.

When he raised his eyes and looked,

he saw vultures in the clouds.

Column 3

1He raised his voice and declared:

"May Baal shatter the wings of the vultures,

may Baal shatter their pinions;

let them fall at my feet.

I will split open their bellies and look;

if there is fat, if there is bone,

5I will weep and I will bury him,

put him into a divine pit in the earth.”

These words had just come from his mouth,

this speech from his lips,

when Baal shattered the wings of the vultures,

Baal shattered their pinions,

10and they fell at his feet.

He split open their bellies and looked;

there was no fat, there was no bone.

He raised his voice and declared:

“May Baal rebuild the vultures’ wings,

may Baal rebuild their pinions;

vultures, up, and fly away!”

When he raised his eyes and looked,

15he saw Hirgab, the father of vultures.

He raised his voice and declared:

“May Baal shatter Hirgab’s wings,

may Baal shatter his pinions;

let him fall at my feet.

I will split open his belly and look;

if there is fat, if there is bone,

I will weep and I will bury him,

put him into a divine pit in the earth.”

These words had just come from his mouth,

this speech from his lips,

when Baal shattered Hirgab’s wings,

Baal shattered his pinions,

and he fell at his feet.

He split open his belly and looked;

there was no fat, there was no bone.

He raised his voice and declared:

“May Baal rebuild Hirgab’s wings,

may Baal rebuild his pinions;

Hirgab, up, and fly away!”

When he raised his eyes and looked,

he saw Samal, the mother of vultures.

30He raised his voice and declared:

“May Baal shatter Samal’s wings,

may Baal shatter her pinions;

let her fall at my feet.

I will split open her belly and look;

if there is fat, if there is bone,

I will weep and I will bury him,

35put him into a divine pit in the earth.”

These words had just come from his mouth,

this speech from his lips,

when Baal shattered Samal’s wings,

Baal shattered her pinions,

she fell at his feet.

He split open her belly and looked;

there was fat, there was bone.

From them he took Aqhat . . .

he wept and he buried him,

he buried him . . .

Then he raised his voice and declared:

“May Baal shatter the vultures’ wings,

may Baal shatter their pinions,

if they fly over my son’s grave

and harm him in his sleep.

Qor-maym, may what is yours be cursed,

woe to what is yours, Qor-maym,

for near you Aqhat the Hero was killed.

Be always an alien residing in El's temple;

now flee forevermore,

from now on and for all generations."

He set the end of the staff in his hand;

he arrived at Mararat-tagullal-banir.

He raised his voice and declared:

"Woe to you, Mararat-tagullal-banir,

for near you Aqhat the Hero was killed.

May your root not rise from the ground,

your head droop as it is plucked;

now flee forevermore,

now and for all generations."

He set the end of the staff in his hand;

Column 4

he arrived at the town of Abiluma,

Abiluma, the town of Prince Moon.

He raised his voice and declared:

“Woe to you, town of Abiluma,

for near you Aqhat the Hero was killed.

May Baal blind you, now and forevermore,

from now on and for all generations.”

He set the end of the staff in his hand.

Danel arrived at his house,

Danel reached his palace.

The weepers entered his house,

the mourners his palace,

those who gash their skin his court.

They wept for Aqhat the Hero,

shed tears for the child of Danel, the man of Rapau.

The days became months,

the months became years,

15up to seven years,

they wept for Aqhat the Hero,

shed tears for the child of Danel, the man of Rapau.

Then, in the seventh year,

Danel, the man of Rapau, spoke;

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite,

raised his voice and declared:

20“Leave my house, weepers,

leave my palace, mourners,

leave my court, you who gash your skin.”

He made a sacrifice to the gods,

he sent incense up to heaven,

incense of the Harnamite to the stars. . . .

Lines 25–27 are damaged. They refer to musical instruments, perhaps used at the meal in honor of the deceased.

Pugat who carries water spoke:

“My father, you have made a sacrifice to the gods,

you have sent incense up to heaven,

incense of the Harnamite to the stars.

Now bless me, that I may go with your blessing;

favor me, that I may go with your favor.

I will kill my brother’s killer,

put an end to whoever put an end to my mother’s son.”

Danel, the man of Rapau, replied:

“Pugat, with passion may you live—

you who carry water,

you who collect dew on your hair,

you who know the course of the stars. . . .

May you kill your brother's killer,

put an end to whoever put an end to your mother's son."

. . . She washed and put on rouge,

she put on rouge of sea-dye,

from a thousand fathoms in the vast expanse of the sea.

She put on a hero's clothes,

she placed a knife in her sheath,

she placed a sword in her scabbard;

and on top she put on women's clothes.

As Sun, the gods' torch, went down,

Pugat entered the fields;

As Sun, the gods' torch, set,

Pugat arrived at the tents.

Word was brought to Yatpan:

"The woman we hired has come to your encampment,

she has come to the tents.”

And Yatpan, the Lady’s Warrior, replied:

“Receive her: she’ll give me wine to drink;

she’ll take the cup from my hand,

the mug from my right hand.”

55Pugat was received; she gave him a drink;

she took the cup from his hand,

the mug from his right hand.

Then Yatpan, the Lady’s Warrior, said:

“. . . May the hand that killed Aqhat the Hero,

kill enemies by the thousands. . . .”

Lines 59–61 are badly damaged.

Twice she gave him wine to drink,

she gave him wine to drink.

On the left side of this column at line 23, there is a scribal note: “and here one returns to the story.” The note apparently instructs the singer of the story that the plot is to resume either here, where it stopped to narrate Danel’s rituals of lamentation for his son, or perhaps at the end of this tablet, where the story is taken up in the next tablet, which would have described the completion of Pugat’s revenge of her brother’s death against his murderer, Yatpan.

THE REPHAIM

INTRODUCTION

The fragmentary and obscure texts we call *The Rephaim* are presented here following most scholars, as three tablets. They have sometimes been considered a sequel to *Aqhat*, because both mention Danel, Aqhat's father. In these texts, he appears as a model figure in family matters of life and death.

The Rephaim (probably vocalized in Ugaritic as "Rapauma"), the principal figures in *The Rephaim*, were the deified dead ancestors. Their name may mean "Healthy Ones," denoting their well-being after their deaths. The divine status of the Rephaim is evident not only from *The Rephaim*, where they are called "gods" and "divine ones," but also from the end of *Baal*:

Sun rules the Rephaim,

Sun rules the divine ones:

Your company are the gods,

see, the dead are your company.

Devotion to dead ancestors among the Canaanites is suggested by the lines describing the duties of the ideal son in *Aqhat*—he will "set up a stela for his divine ancestor, a votive marker for his clan in the sanctuary"—and by other texts not translated here. While the passage from *Aqhat* suggests devotion to the dead family members as a general norm in the society of Ugarit, another, from *Kirta*, points to the tradition of the Rephaim recalled by the Ugaritic monarchy:

May Kirta be highly praised,

in the midst of the Rephaim of the underworld,

in the assembly of Ditan's company.

The Rephaim were the divine dead in general Ugaritic society; in another text the Ugaritic dynasty recalled its own ancestral Rephaim as warrior-kings of great antiquity.

From kings and commoners alike, the Rephaim received devotion in the belief that they would offer their blessing for human fertility, as reflected by the divine blessing of Kirta quoted above. *The Rephaim* presents the living Aqhat and the dead Rephaim in the celebration of agricultural fertility. In these texts, Danel invites the Rephaim to a feast. This evidently takes place at the time of the late summer fruit harvest (known as Sukkot or Booths in the Bible). The celebration of fertility in this season may also have been a traditional time for the monarchy to pay tribute to its ancestors. The fragmentary reference to Baal at the end of *The Rephaim* is viewed by some scholars as an expression of the relationship between life and death. In any case, it is evident that human and agricultural fertility was a central concern.

The understanding of the Rephaim as gods of the underworld is supported by references to beings with the same name in later sources. In the Bible, the Rephaim comprise two groups. The first are the inhabitants of the underworld, often called "shades," who appear in passages such as Job 26:5: "The Rephaim below tremble, the waters and their inhabitants." This is also the connotation of the term in two Phoenician burial inscriptions from Sidon, one of which threatens those who disturb the tomb with "no home with the Rephaim; may they not be buried in a grave; may they have no son or descendant in their place." Finally, in its condemnation of the king of Babylon to the underworld (here called Sheol), Isaiah 14:9 preserves another example of the Rephaim (usually translated "shades") as the dead kings of old:

Sheol beneath is stirred up

to meet you when you come;

it rouses the Rephaim to greet you,

all who were leaders of the earth;

it raises from their thrones

all who were kings of the nations.

The other meaning of the term in the Bible is as a race of giants who lived in parts of the land of Canaan before the arrival of the Israelites (see, e.g., Gen. 15:20; Josh. 17:15). Deuteronomy recalls the legendary figure of King Og of Bashan, in Transjordan, as the last of the giant Rephaim: "His bed, an iron bed, can still be seen in Rabbah of the Ammonites. By the common cubit it is nine cubits long and four cubits wide [about 13.5 by 6 feet]" (Deut. 3:11). In a Ugaritic text not translated here, the god Rapau (as in Danel's title, "the man of Rapau") is mentioned as the king of Ashtaroth and Edrei, two cities in northern Transjordan associated with King Og (see Deut. 1:4; also 2:11; 3:13).

The Rephaim

TABLET 1

About half of the left side of the first column of the front of the tablet has broken off, as have the bottom and back of the entire tablet. The right side of the first column has about ten fragmentary lines, which refer to a feast of the Rephaim that takes place on a "summer day" when they eat and drink.

The second column has about eleven lines, which are better preserved. The text seems to open with the end of a speech that invites the Rephaim to the speaker's house for a seven-day feast (described at the end of the third tablet). Danel, the father of Aqhat, is mentioned toward the end of the column, so he may be the speaker.

1" . . . eight in the midst of my palace."

To his place the Rephaim went,

to his place went the gods.

They mounted their chariots,

they hitched their horses . . .

They went one day, then two;

after sunset on the third,

the Rephaim arrived at the threshing floor,

the gods at the plantations.

And Danel, the man of Rapau, spoke,

the Hero, the man of the Harnamite:

“The Rephaim are at the threshing floor,

the gods at the plantations.

Those who have come, let them eat,

feed . . .”

TABLET 2

The front of the tablet is badly broken, with about twelve incomplete lines. Like the preceding tablet, it describes an invitation to a feast for the Rephaim. Line 8 names a speaker with the word that may be either the name of the god El or the common noun meaning "god." The back of the tablet contains only five letters, with only one intelligible phrase, "to the earth."

TABLET 3

The front of the tablet has about twenty-six incomplete lines in the left column. The first five lines are damaged, but they seem to contain an invitation to the Rephaim. The most legible part of this column, in lines 5–11, describes their travel to the house of the speaker, whose invitation is then quoted.

5To his place the Rephaim went,

to his place the divine ones went,

the warriors of Baal and the warriors of Anat.

"Go to my house, Rephaim,

to my house I call you,

10I call you to the midst of my palace."

To his place the Rephaim went,

to his place the divine ones went. . . .

Lines 12–17 are badly damaged, and the highly broken lines 17–18 repeat idioms known from other passages in the Ugaritic corpus. These describe a figure who takes up his throne and invites the Rephaim to his palace. The rest of the lines in this column describe the journey of the Rephaim to his house.

The right-hand column on the front of the tablet contains some twenty-six mostly complete lines, more than in any other column in these three tablets.

“Behold your son, behold . . .

your grandson at your place.

the small one will kiss your lips…”

There, shoulder to shoulder,

brothers . . . .

There were the Rephaim of Baal,

the warriors of Baal and the warriors of Anat.

There the forces circled about,

the eternal royal princes.

As when Anat goes hunting,

she shoots the birds of heaven,

so they slaughtered oxen, sheep as well,

they felled bulls, fatling rams,

calves a year old, lambs of the flock, with kids.

Lines 14–20 are not entirely clear. They mention a table set with fruit and wine, both products of the late summer harvest. The remaining lines described the seven-day feast of the Rephaim, followed by a reference to the god Baal. The tablet breaks off before it becomes known what Baal does or says.

One day passed, then two:

the Rephaim ate and drank.

Three, then four days;

five, then six days;

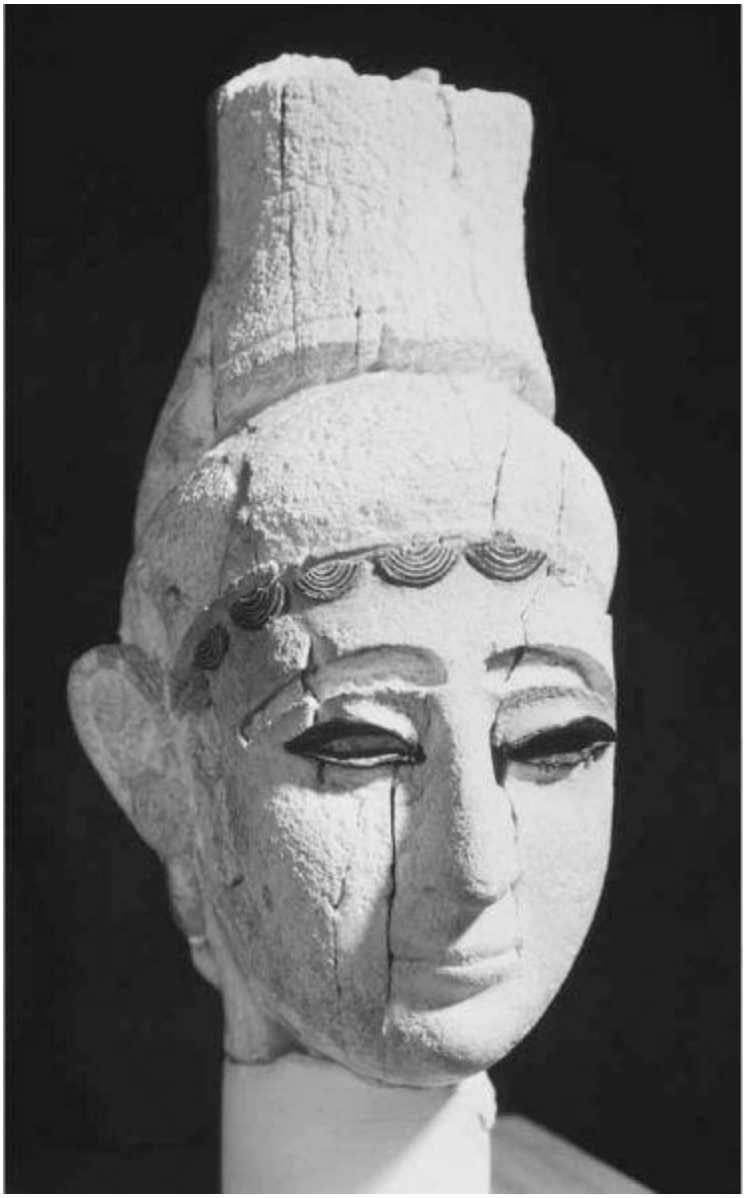
the Rephaim ate and drank,

In the house of eating, on the height,

25. . . in the heart of the Lebanon.

Then, on the seventh day,

Baal the Conqueror . . .



An ivory head, about 6 inches (15 cm) high, probably part of a larger statue, with partially preserved inlaid hair, eyebrows, and eyes. It is often identified as a depiction of a prince of Ugarit. **(Photo: Bridgeman-Giraudon / Art Resource, NY).**

KIRTA

INTRODUCTION

Divinity doth hedge a king.

***Hamlet*, act 4, scene 5**

The centrality of kingship as a Canaanite institution is well illustrated by the three tablets containing the story of Kirta. The surviving episodes are parts of a larger cycle in which there was at least one more tablet after those translated here: the final column of the third tablet is fully preserved and ends in the middle of a sentence. Though we have no indication of exactly how much is missing, we can suppose that there were episodes

before and after each of the other tablets. Nevertheless, while the narrative as we have it is not the whole story, each episode is largely self-contained and therefore understandable. The Arthurian legends provide a good parallel; in them a theme such as the quest for the Holy Grail loosely ties together various characters and plots.

The hero of the cycle is a king, whose name was probably pronounced Kirta, and the basic theme that unites the episodes is the survival of his dynasty. The first tablet opens with a statement of Kirta's predicament: his once-large family had perished, and he had no descendants. Kirta's situation recalls that of Job, a comparison strengthened by Kirta's sickness described in the second and third tablets. But whereas Job's problems followed one another quickly, Kirta's were spread out over a long period, and each difficulty forms a separate episode. There are also echoes of *Aqhat*: like Danel when he was childless, Kirta seems to have performed an incubation rite, during which El, his patron and perhaps his father, appeared to him in a dream.

In this dream Kirta was given detailed instructions to offer a sacrifice to the gods and then to prepare for war. The war was to be total—all segments of the population had to serve or provide a substitute—and its purpose was to sue for the hand of the daughter of Pabil, the king of the city of Udm, a seven-day march away. The sketches of the mustering of the army and the siege of Pabil's city are reminiscent of Homer's description of the shield of Achilles, on which Hephaestus depicted various scenes from human life, including a city at peace and a city under siege. Kirta's dream went on to foretell his negotiations with Pabil after seven days of siege; in them Kirta demanded Pabil's daughter Hurriya in marriage. Hurriya's beauty is compared to that of the goddesses Anat and Astarte, and she is described like the statue of a goddess with jewels for eyes.

With the repetition typical of ancient narrative poetry, the instructions given in the dream are repeated virtually line for line as Kirta carried them out. There is only one significant digression from the instructions: en route to Pabil's city, Udm, Kirta stopped at a shrine of Asherah, where he promised an offering to the goddess if his quest proved successful. Such a departure from divine directions is a bad omen of things to come.

Events turned out as El had prophesied in Kirta's dream, for in the second and least complete of the tablets El blessed Kirta's marriage in the presence of the Assembly of the gods and promised him many children, of which even the youngest would have a large inheritance. This blessing identifies Kirta in the long line of the Rephaim, the ancestral, divinized heroes and kings of Ugarit, and also with the assembly of Ditan, himself a deified ancestor, who is listed in Mesopotamian royal lists as a distant forebear of King Hammurapi of Babylon. This blessing marks the height of Kirta's well-being, for at this point he had secured a wife who would provide him with heirs. All the while, however, Kirta neglected to fulfill his vow to Asherah and was punished by being stricken with an unnamed but debilitating disease, evidently just before a feast to which he had invited the peers of his realm, his "seventy noble bulls, eighty noble gazelles." (The aristocracy of the Canaanites, like their pantheon, often had animal names as titles.)

The third tablet begins with a speech by Ilihu, one of Kirta's sons, urging his father to accept the fact of his imminent death. The king's sickness had had a catastrophic effect: as though in sympathy, nature had failed and famine threatened. It seemed that Kirta had to die, even though he was in some sense El's son. Nevertheless, moved by the prayers of the people of Hubur, the capital city, or of Kirta's family, or perhaps of the sick king himself, El decided to intervene. The disease was so virulent that none of the other gods dared to try to cure it, so El pledged to act

personally. He created and sent his divine agent of healing, Shataqat. The disease was expelled by her (as expressed by her name, which means "the one who expels"), and death was thus averted. The sickness itself is not described in detail, but it involved a fever that Shataqat was able to break. Kirta regained his appetite and resumed his rule.

His troubles, however, had not ended. Yassub, another of his sons, threatened to oust Kirta from the throne on the grounds that he had not fully recovered and that his illness had caused him to neglect the essential duties of kingship. Kirta responded with a curse on his son, and here the story breaks off.

As this summary of the contents of the three extant tablets of the *Kirta* cycle shows, Kirta had to face three problems as a king: his childlessness, his illness, and his son's challenge. Without an heir or a wife to provide one, the dynasty was doomed to extinction. If a civil war should occur as the result of an uncertain succession, Kirta would have failed in one of his essential duties, the preservation of order; one key function of kingship in the ancient world was the maintenance of stability, so that the subjects of the realm would not be disturbed in their prescribed tasks. This required the promulgation of laws to regulate the relations between citizens, the defeat or deterrence of enemies from the outside, and the guarantee of a smooth transfer of power from the king to his successor. His childlessness prevented Kirta from fulfilling the third of these responsibilities, and this is the motivation for the first episode, which recounts the search for a wife.

The problem of Kirta's illness also affected the social order, for while he was sick there was no one to defend the powerless—widows and orphans, the poor, and the oppressed. His son Yassub attempted, presumably unsuccessfully, to usurp the throne, on

the grounds that Kirta was incapable of ruling. This episode, unfortunately incomplete, is similar to Absalom's revolt against his father David as narrated in 2 Samuel 15: Absalom exploited David's failure to provide justice for his subjects.

The emblematic character of the story of Kirta is also conveyed through several names of the characters. Popular etymologies and wordplays with the personal names of the protagonists seem to dovetail with the story's themes. Originally a Hurrian name, "Kirta" evokes the verb "to cut" in Ugaritic. This is precisely the condition of his household at the beginning of the story. The name of his wife, Huraya, may be a play on the verb "to conceive" (with a slightly different spelling). Bearing children is one of her primary roles according to the divine blessing. She turned the condition of Kirta's "cut down" household into a line with many children. Their daughter was called Thitmanit, literally, "Eighth" (cf. the name Octavia), a name suggesting her late place in the birth order according to the blessing. Despite the traditional desire for a male heir, Thitmanit is a favored child, and in the third tablet she stands out for her emotional concern for her father. The name of Kirta's rebellious son, Yassub, suggests the opposite sort of child: it may suggest "Sucker," as in a breast-feeding newborn (also mentioned in the divine wedding blessing), and thus a mere baby who in tablet 3 immaturely and prematurely desired his father's throne. The emblematic names of Kirta and his household conjure up the world of kingship, with the blessings and challenges that it could encounter.

The stories of David and Kirta are linked by a shared theme, the problem of succession. In 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2, scholars have identified a document that has been styled "the Succession History of David" because its primary focus is the question of who would succeed David on the throne of Israel. The last episode in the Succession History describes the struggle

between two of David's sons, Adonijah and Solomon, over the kingship. David was still alive, though advanced in years and evidently senile, and the court, as well as the religious and military leaders, was divided into factions supporting the rival claimants. Again a king's lack of health caused the breakdown of the social order.

Kingship in the ancient world, however, was not just a political and social institution; it was also religious, or sacral. Kings were representatives of their people to the gods. Kirta, for example, clearly functioned as a priest in offering sacrifice to El and to Baal, and he was present at the divine Assembly when El and the other gods blessed his marriage. In addition, and perhaps because he was a member of the divine Assembly, the king was responsible for the prosperity of his subjects. There was a direct connection between the health of the king and the agricultural cycle; more accurately, the king and the gods were jointly responsible for the harvest. When Baal died, Death reigned and nothing grew; when the king was ill, the crops failed and famine resulted. Thus Kirta's sickness, the subject of the latter part of the cycle, was a failure of kingship, but because of his quasi-divine status the gods were also implicated in its consequences.

The king was human, and yet was the head of human society; the gods communicated with him, yet he was not fully a god. This ambiguity may be clarified by an examination of Kirta's titles. He is called "the Lad of El," "El's servant," and "El's son." The first two epithets are synonymous and express Kirta's close, although subordinate, relationship with El. It is possible that the third title is to be taken literally and that Kirta, who may have been the legendary founder of the royal house of Ugarit, was El's son by a human mother; there are parallels to divine parentage of the founders of cities and dynasties in Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman mythology. But the Canaanite ideology of kingship has closer reflections in the Bible; the Israelites shared the institution

of the monarchy and much of its concomitant ritual and idiom with their neighbors. We are therefore justified in subsuming Ugaritic and biblical evidence under one heading and in using each to interpret the other.

The biblical sources are especially helpful in interpreting Kirta's designation as "El's son." In the coronation hymn that appears in the Bible as Psalm 2, the king speaks:

I will tell of Yahweh's decree;

he said to me:

"You are my son;

this day I have begotten you."

(Ps. 2:7)

Other uses of the father-son image to describe the king's relationship to the gods are found in 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 89:26; taken together with the Ugaritic evidence, they suggest that the coronation ritual included the adoption of the newly crowned king as son of the national god. It is best, therefore, not to understand Kirta's title in a biological sense.

Despite his status as El's adopted son, Kirta was still a mortal; he had to die, and he should not yearn for "kingship like

his Father's, or dominion like that of the Father of Humanity." For the Canaanites, unlike the Egyptians, with whom they had commercial contacts and by whom they were influenced, did not believe that the king was a god; to be son of god was to remain human.

Kirta

TABLET 1

Column 1

1**Belonging to *Kirta***

About five lines are missing from the top of this column, which begins with a description of Kirta's disastrous situation.

Perished was the house of the king,

which had had seven brothers,

eight sons of one mother.

Kirta our patriarch was destroyed,

Kirta’s dynasty was finished.

A legal wife he had found for himself,

his lawfully wedded spouse;

he had wed a wife, but she passed away.

She had had a mother’s clan:

one-third died in childbirth,

one-fourth by disease,

one-fifth was gathered by Resheph,

one-sixth was lost at sea,

one-seventh fell in a water channel.

Kirta saw his offspring,

he saw his offspring destroyed,

his royal house completely finished.

So all his offspring had perished,

his line in its entirety.

He entered his room and wept,

he continued his moans and shed tears;

his tears poured out

like shekel-weights to the ground,

like five-pieces on his bed.

As he wept, he fell asleep,

as he shed tears, there was slumber;

sleep overpowered him as he lay down,

slumber, as he curled up.

In his dream El came down,

in his vision the Father of Humanity.

He approached Kirta, asking:

“Why are you weeping, Kirta?

why does the Graceful Lad of El shed tears?

Is it kingship like his Father’s that he desires,

or dominion like that of the Father of Humanity?”

About seven lines are missing from the bottom of the column. In them, El continues to offer power and wealth to Kirta, who declines the god’s offer and instead requests male heirs.

Column 2

“Why should I want silver or gleaming gold,

along with its land,

or perpetual slaves,

three horses,

chariots in a courtyard,

a slave woman’s sons?

Give me sons that I may be established,

give me a clan that I may be magnified!”

And the Bull, his father El, replied:

“Enough of your weeping, Kirta,

of shedding tears, Graceful Lad of El.

Wash yourself and put on rouge,

wash your forearms to the elbow,

from your fingers to your shoulder.

Enter the shade of your tent;

take a lamb in your hand,

a sacrificial lamb in your right hand,

a young animal in both your hands,

the measure of your food that can be poured out.

Take the proper sacrificial bird,

pour wine into a silver goblet,

honey into a golden bowl,

and go up to the top of the tower,

climb to the height of the wall;

raise your hands to heaven,

sacrifice to the Bull, your father El;

serve Baal with your sacrifice,

the son of Dagan with your game.

Then let Kirta come down from the roof;

and prepare food for the city,

grain for Bit-Hubur;

let him bake enough bread for five months,

enough provisions for six.

Let the force be supplied and go forth,

let the mighty army be supplied

and let the force go forth.

Your army will be powerful indeed,

three million strong,

soldiers beyond counting,

archers beyond reckoning.

They will go in thousands, like a downpour,

and in ten thousands, like the early rain;

they will go two by two,

three by three, all together.

The only son will close up his house;

the widow will hire a substitute;

the invalid will carry his own bed;

the blind will run quickly;

even the newlywed will go forth:

he will entrust his wife to another,

his beloved to a stranger.

Column 3

Like locusts that live in the field,

like grasshoppers at the edge of the desert,

go one day, and a second,

a third, then a fourth day,

a fifth, then a sixth day.

Then, at sunset on the seventh,

you will arrive at Udm the great,

Udm the powerful;

and attack the towns,

raid the villages;

let the woodcutters be swept from the fields,

the women gathering straw from the threshing floors;

let the women drawing water be swept from the well,

the women filling their jars from the spring.

Stop for a day, and a second,

a third, then a fourth day,

a fifth, then a sixth day:

Don’t shoot your arrows into the city,

your slingstones into the fortress.

15**Then, by sunset on the seventh,**

King Pabil will be unable to sleep

because of the noise of his horses neighing,

because of the sound of his asses braying,

because of the lowing of the plow oxen,

because of the howling of the hunting dogs.

20**And he will send messengers to you,**

to Kirta at his headquarters:

‘Message of King Pabil:

Accept silver and gleaming gold,

along with its land,

and perpetual slaves,

three horses,

chariots in a courtyard,

a slave woman’s sons.

Kirta, accept these as peace offerings,

and leave my house, king,

go away from my court, Kirta.

Do not lay siege to Udm the great,

Udm the powerful.

For Udm is a gift of El,

a present from the Father of Humanity.’

Then you are to send messengers back to him:

‘Why should I want silver or gleaming gold,

along with its land,

or perpetual slaves,

three horses,

chariots in a courtyard,

a slave woman’s sons?

You must give me rather what is not in my house:

Give me Lady Hurriya,

40the loveliest of your firstborn offspring:

her loveliness is like Anat’s,

her beauty is like Astarte’s,

her pupils are lapis lazuli,

her eyes are gleaming alabaster.

45. . . I will rest in the gaze of her eyes.

This in my dream El granted,

in my vision the Father of Humanity,

to bear offspring for Kirta,

a boy for El’s servant.’”

Kirta awoke—it was a dream,

El’s servant had had a vision.

He washed himself and put on rouge,

washed his forearms to the elbow,

from his fingers to his shoulder.

He entered the shade of his tent;

he took a lamb in his hand,

a sacrificial lamb in his right hand,

a young animal in both his hands,

the measure of his food that could be poured out.

He took the proper sacrificial bird,

Column 4

he poured wine into a silver goblet,

honey into a golden bowl,

and he went up to the top of the tower,

climbed to the height of the wall.

He raised his hands to heaven,

sacrificed to the Bull, his father El;

he served Baal with his sacrifice,

the son of Dagan with his game.

Then Kirta came down from the roof;

he prepared food for the city,

grain for Bit-Hubur;

he had baked enough bread for five months,

enough provisions for six.

The force was supplied and went forth,

the mighty army was supplied

and the force went forth.

His army was powerful indeed,

three million strong.

They went in thousands, like a downpour,

in ten thousands, like the early rain;

they went two by two,

three by three, all together.

The only son closed up his house;

the widow hired a substitute;

the invalid carried his own bed;

the blind ran quickly;

even the newlywed went forth:

he entrusted his wife to another,

his beloved to a stranger.

Like locusts that live in the field,

like grasshoppers at the edge of the desert,

they went one day, and a second,

then at sunset on the third,

they arrived at the shrine of Asherah of Tyre,

of the goddess of Sidon.

There Kirta the Noble made a vow:

“As Asherah of Tyre lives,

Goddess of Sidon,

if I take Hurriya to my house,

if I bring the maiden to my court,

then I will give double her price in silver,

and triple her price in gold.”

He went one day, and a second,

a third, then a fourth day;

then, at sunset on the fourth,

he arrived at Udm the great,

Udm the powerful;

and he attacked the towns,

raided the villages;

its woodcutters were swept from the fields,

the women gathering straw from the threshing floors;

Column 5

the women drawing water were swept from the well,

the women filling their jars from the spring.

He stopped for a day, and a second,

a third, then a fourth day,

a fifth, then a sixth day.

Then, at sunset on the seventh,

King Pabil could not sleep

because of the noise of his horses neighing,

because of the sound of his asses braying,

because of the lowing of the plow oxen,

because of the howling of the hunting dogs.

Then King Pabil

loudly declared to his wife:

15“Hear now, . . . my wife . . .

Lines 16-29 are too fragmentary to translate.

Under the siege by Kirta’s army, King Pabil instructs his messengers to deliver a message to Kirta.

30“Then head to Kirta, at his headquarters,

and say to Kirta the Noble:

‘Message of King Pabil:

35Accept silver and gleaming gold,

along with its land,

and perpetual slaves,

three horses,

chariots in a courtyard,

a slave woman's sons.

Kirta, accept these as peace offerings.

Do not lay siege to Udm the great,

Udm the powerful.

For Udm is a gift of El,

a present from the Father of Humanity.

Go away from my house, king,

leave my court, Kirta.'"

Column 6

Four lines are missing from the top of the column; they can be partly restored from the parallel material in the preceding columns.

Then the messengers headed to Kirta, at his headquarters;

they raised their voices and declared:

“Message of King Pabil:

Accept silver and gleaming gold,

along with its land,

and perpetual slaves,

three horses,

chariots in a courtyard,

a slave woman’s sons.

Kirta, accept these as peace offerings.

Do not lay siege to Udm the great,

Udm the powerful.

For Udm is a gift of El,

a present from the Father of Humanity.

Go away from my house, king,

leave my court, Kirta.”

Kirta the Noble answered:

“Why should I want silver or gleaming gold,

along with its land,

or perpetual slaves,

three horses,

chariots in a courtyard,

a slave woman’s sons?

You must give me rather what is not in my house:

give me Lady Hurriya,

the loveliest of your firstborn offspring:

her loveliness is like Anat’s,

her beauty is like Astarte’s,

her pupils are lapis lazuli,

her eyes are gleaming alabaster.

This in my dream El granted,

in my vision the Father of Humanity,

to bear offspring for Kirta,

35a boy for El's servant."

The messengers left, they did not delay;

they headed for Udm, to King Pabil.

They raised their voices and declared:

40"Message of Kirta, the Noble,

word of the Gracious Lad of El . . ."

TABLET 2

Column 1

About forty lines are missing from the top of the column, including the scribal title for the tablet series, "Belonging to *Kirta*." The missing lines also included the continuation of Kirta's message to Pabil from the preceding tablet, as well as Pabil's answer. When the narrative resumes, it is clear that Pabil accepted Kirta's demand for Hurriya. Hurriya's reputation for compassion is noted, perhaps by the people of Udm, who also lament her absence.

“She extended a hand to the hungry,

she extended a hand to the thirsty.”

So they remembered her, and they went in procession

to Kirta, to his headquarters.

As the cow lows for her calf,

as soldiers long for their mothers,

so Udm sighs.

And Kirta the Noble answered . . .

Column 2

About twenty lines are missing from the top of this column, and the first two surviving lines are badly damaged. Kirta has returned home to Hubur with Hurriya and holds a wedding reception for gods and goddesses at his palace.

. . . Baal the Conqueror,

. . . Prince Moon,

. . . Kothar-wa-Hasis,

. . . the Maiden,

Prince Resheph,

the congregation of the gods,

three by three.

Then Kirta the Noble

placed a doorman at his palace.

Entry into the house he allowed,

exit he did not allow.

The Assembly of the gods arrived,

and Baal the Conqueror said:

“Do not depart, El the Kind, the Compassionate;

bless Kirta the Noble,

strengthen the Graceful Lad of El.”

El took a cup in his hand,

a goblet in his right hand;

he pronounced a blessing over his servant;

El blessed Kirta the Noble,

strengthened the Gracious Lad of El:

“The wife you have taken, Kirta,

the wife you have taken into your house,

the maiden you brought into your court,

she will bear you seven sons and daughters,

she will produce eight for you;

she will bear Yassub the Lad,

who will nurse on the milk of Astarte,

suck the breasts of Maiden Anat,

the two wet nurses of the gods.”

Column 3

About fifteen lines are missing, and the first surviving line is very damaged. In the missing part of the story, El perhaps has named a second son to be born to Kirta and Hurriya; this son, named Ilihu, appears later in the story.

El blesses Hurriya with six daughters, bringing the total number of children of the royal couple to eight. The last of the six daughters, Thitmanit (meaning "Eighth"), appears in tablet 3.

"May Kirta be highly praised,

in the midst of the Rephaim of the underworld,

in the assembly of Ditan's company.

5She will soon bear you daughters:

she will bear the girl . . .

she will bear the girl . . .

she will bear the girl . . .

10she will bear the girl . . .

she will bear the girl . . .

she will bear the girl . . . .

May Kirta be highly praised,

in the midst of the Rephaim of the underworld,

15in the assembly of Ditan's company.

The youngest of these I declare the firstborn!"

The gods pronounced their blessing and went;

the gods went to their tents,

the Council of El to their homes.

20And she soon bore him a son,

she soon bore him two sons.

Then, after seven years,

the sons of Kirta were as many as had been promised;

25so, too, were the daughters of Hurriya.

But Asherah remembered his vow, the goddess . . . .

And she raised her voice and declared:

"Is it so, Kirta,

in reciting the vow . . . ?

I will break . . .”

About seven lines are missing. Asherah punishes Kirta with illness because he failed to fulfill the vow that he had made to this goddess at her shrine on his way to the city of Udm.

Column 4

About five lines are missing.

1. . . he called to his wife:

“Listen, Lady Hurriya:

Slaughter your fattest animal;

5 open a vat of wine;

call my seventy noble bulls,

my eighty noble gazelles,

the noble bulls of Hubur the great,

of Hubur the powerful. . . .”

Lines 10–13 are too fragmentary to translate.

Lady Hurriya obeyed;

she slaughtered her fattest animal,

she opened a vat of wine.

She brought his noble bulls to him;

she brought his noble gazelles to him,

the noble bulls of Hubur the great,

of Hubur the powerful.

To Kirta’s house they came;

to his home . . .,

they proceeded . . .

She extended her hand to the bowl;

she put her knife to the meat.

And Lady Hurriya said:

“I have called you to eat and drink

. . . for Kirta your lord.”

About fifteen lines are missing, which may describe Hurriya breaking the bad news to Kirta’s nobles. The next column repeats this sequence of events, perhaps to a second tier of Kirta’s leaders.

Column 5

Lines 1–6 are badly damaged.

She extended her hand to the bowl;

she put her knife to the meat.

And Lady Hurriya said:

“I have called you to eat and drink. . . .”

. . . they wept over Kirta,

The noble bulls spoke;

they wept . . .

Lines 15–17 are damaged.

An unnamed speaker, perhaps Hurriya, suggests a plan of succession given the prospect of Kirta's death.

"Kirta has certainly arrived at sunset,

20our lord, to sundown.

And so let Yassub reign over us,

and Kirta the Noble…"

Lines 22–29 are very damaged, and another eighteen lines are missing from the bottom of this column.

Column 6

Lines 1–2 are damaged; they mention the feast that is taking place.

And Lady Hurriya said:

“I have called you to eat and drink,

at the banquet of Kirta your lord.”

Over Kirta they wept;

their words were like the words of noble bulls.

. . . Kirta

Line 9 is almost completely broken, and about forty lines are missing from the bottom of this column.

TABLET 3

Column 1

Belonging to *Kirta*

Kirta's son Ilihu receives instructions about what to say to his dying father.

"Like a dog that has passed from your house,

like a hound also from your grave,

so you, too, father, are dying like a mortal;

5 your grave will become a place of mourning,

with women's laments, glorious father.

Baal's mountain, father, will weep for you,

Zaphon, the holy stronghold,

Nanaya, the mighty stronghold,

the stronghold wide and broad:

10'Is not Kirta El's son,

the offspring of the Kind and Holy One?'"

He entered his father's presence;

he wept, bitterly so;

he spoke as he wept:

“Our father, I rejoice in your living,

we exult in your not-dying;

but like a dog that has passed from your house,

like a hound also from your grave,

so you, too, father, are dying like a mortal;

your grave will become a place of mourning,

with women’s laments, glorious father.

How can Kirta be called El’s son,

the offspring of the Kind and Holy One?

Or do gods die?

Will the Kind One’s offspring not live on?”

But Kirta the Noble replied:

“My son, don’t weep,

don’t grieve for me;

my son, don’t drain the well of your eyes,

your head’s springs of tears.

Call your sister Thitmanit,

a daughter whose passion is strong:

She would weep and grieve for me,

. . . so do not tell your sister;

your sister should not grieve;

I know how loving she is.

She should not let her tears fall in the fields,

nor her spirit’s outpouring in the meadows.

Wait for the setting of Lady Sun,

the shining of the Great Light.

Then say to your sister Thitmanit:

‘Our Kirta has prepared a banquet,

the king has ordered a feast.

Take your drum in your hand,

your dance-drum in your right hand;

go, sing on the heights!

For a vow offer silver,

for your donation, gold for all.’”

Then the Hero Ilihu

took his spear in his hand,

his lance in his right hand,

and he proceeded on his run.

As he arrived, it grew dark;

his sister had gone out to draw water.

He placed his spear on the hill;

he went to meet her at the gate.

As soon as she saw her brother,

her back gave out; she collapsed to the ground;

55when she saw her brother, she wept.

“Is the king extremely ill?

Is Kirta your lord sick?”

And the Hero Ilihu replied:

“The king is not extremely ill,

60Kirta your lord is not sick.

He has prepared a banquet,

the king has ordered a feast. . . .”

Column 2

The first sixteen lines are badly damaged. Thitmanit has learned that her brother has lied about Kirta’s condition.

She approached her brother and declared:

20“Why did you deceive me?

How many months has he been ill?

How long has he been sick?”

And the Hero Ilihu replied:

“For three months he has been ill,

for four Kirta has been sick.

Certainly, Kirta is reaching the end,

a grave . . .”

Lines 25–34 are damaged.

She wept, bitterly so;

she spoke as she wept:

“Our father, we rejoice in your living,

we exult in your not-dying;

but like a dog that has passed from your house,

like a hound also from your grave,

so you, too, father, are dying like a mortal,

and your grave will become a place of mourning,

with women's laments, glorious father.

Or do gods die?

Will the Kind One's offspring not live on?

Baal's mountain, father, will weep for you,

Zaphon, the holy stronghold,

Nanaya, the mighty stronghold,

the stronghold wide and broad:

'Is not Kirta El's son,

the offspring of the Kind and Holy One?'"

Then she entered . . .

she entered the chamber . . .

Following Thitmanit's entry, evidently into Kirta's house, there are seven damaged lines at the bottom of the column. The words visible in them mention Thitmanit's weeping and her scraping, presumably of her skin, a mark of profound grief.

Column 3

About thirty lines are missing from the top of this column. As a result of Kirta's illness, the rains have ceased. Orders are given to search the world for signs of vegetation in the face of drought, while farmers suffer from it.

"... pour oil ...

Look, go about earth and heaven,

travel to the far reaches of the earth,

for emmer in watered fields.

Look to the earth for Baal's rain,

to the field for the rain of the Most High;

for Baal's rain benefits the earth,

and the rain of the Most High the field;

it benefits the wheat in the furrow,

the emmer in the tilled ground. . . ."

The plowmen lifted their heads,

upward, the workers of grain:

used up was the food from their bins,

used up was the wine from their skins,

used up was the oil from their vats.

The house of Kirta . . .

The bottom of the column is missing about eighteen lines, which may have included the narrative description of the actions ordered in lines 2–11.

Column 4

About sixteen lines are missing, which evidently contained a prayer to El to heal Kirta, thus ending the drought.

The scene opens with the news that El has heard the prayer. This report seems to be communicated by one deity to another god who had made the appeal to El, perhaps Baal.

“El has heard your speech—it’s like El’s:

You are wise, like the Bull, the Kind One.

Call to Ilisha, the herald god,

Ilisha, the herald of Baal's house,

and his wives, the herald goddesses. . . ."

5. . .

He called to Ilisha, the herald god,

Ilisha, the herald of Baal's house,

and his wives, the herald goddesses.

And El the Kind, the Compassionate, replied:

10"Listen, Ilisha, herald god,

Ilisha, the herald of Baal's house,

and your wives, the herald goddesses:

Go up to the height of the building,

to . . . of the watchtower. . . ."

Lines 15–17 are fragmentary and difficult to interpret. The next twenty-seven lines are missing. They presumably contain the remainder of the command to Ilisha and his

wives, as well as the narrative description of their execution of El's commands to exercise their capacity as heralds; their task is perhaps to summon the deities to El's divine Assembly, described in the next column.

Column 5

About sixteen lines are missing, and the initial nine lines are badly damaged. They perhaps contained an account of the arrival of the deities at El's Assembly.

And El the Kind, the Compassionate, replied:

"Who among the gods can expel the sickness,

drive out the disease?"

But none of the gods answered him.

He spoke a second, then a third time:

"Who among the gods can expel the sickness,

drive out the disease?"

But none of the gods answered him.

He spoke a fourth, then a fifth time:

“Who among the gods can expel the sickness,

drive out the disease?”

But none of the gods answered him.

He spoke a sixth, then a seventh time:

“Who among the gods can expel the sickness,

drive out the disease?”

But none of the gods answered him.

Then El the Kind, the Compassionate, replied:

“My sons, sit down upon your thrones,

upon your princely seats.

I will fashion and establish;

I will establish one to expel the sickness,

to drive out the disease.”

He filled his palms with dirt,

his fingers with the best dirt.

30He pinched off some clay.

Lines 31–38 are fragmentary or missing. In these lines, El finishes making the female, supernatural creature named Shataqat, literally “expeller,” and he commissions her to expel the illness from Kirta. El may also give her a magic wand to use to help expel the disease, as suggested by her actions in the following column.

A cup he takes in his hand,

a goblet in his right:

41“You are the Expeller . . .”

Lines 42–52 are damaged, and eight lines are missing from the bottom of the column. The words that can be reconstructed in lines 42–52 suggest that El commands the Expeller to fly to Kirta and to act as her name signifies.

Column 6

1“Death—be broken!

Expeller—be strong!”

And Expeller left;

she came to Kirta’s house:

. . . she entered and went in,

into the enclosure she went.

She swooped in. . .

With a wand she unbound the knot,

and thus the sickness on his head.

She turned and washed off his sweat;

she restored his appetite for food,

his desire for a meal.

Death was broken!

Expeller was strong!

Then Kirta the Noble gave a command,

he raised his voice and declared:

“Listen, Lady Hurriya:

slaughter a lamb so that I may eat,

some mutton for my meal.”

Lady Hurriya obeyed:

she slaughtered a lamb and he ate,

some mutton for his meal.

One day ended, and on the second

Kirta returned to his throne-room;

he sat on the royal throne,

on the resting place, the seat of dominion.

Now Yassub too lived in the palace,

and his heart instructed him:

“Go to your father, Yassub,

go to your father and speak,

recite to Kirta your lord:

‘Listen closely and pay attention:

when raiders raid, you talk;

when there are invaders, you are idle.

You have let your power become feeble:

you do not judge the cases of widows,

you do not preside over the hearings of the oppressed;

35for you have taken to a sickbed,

you languish on a bed of disease.

Step down from the kingship—let me be king,

from your dominion—let me be enthroned.’”

Yassub the Lad left;

40he entered his father’s presence;

he raised his voice and declared:

“Listen, Kirta the Noble,

listen closely and pay attention:

when raiders raid, you talk,

when there are invaders, you are idle.

You have let your power become feeble:

you do not judge the cases of widows,

you do not preside over the hearings of the oppressed;

you do not drive out those who burden the yoke of the poor,

you do not feed the orphan before you,

nor the widow at your back;

for you have taken to a sick bed,

you languish on a bed of disease.

Step down from the kingship—let me be king,

from your dominion—let me be enthroned.”

But Kirta the Noble replied:

“My son, may Horon smash,

may Horon smash your head,

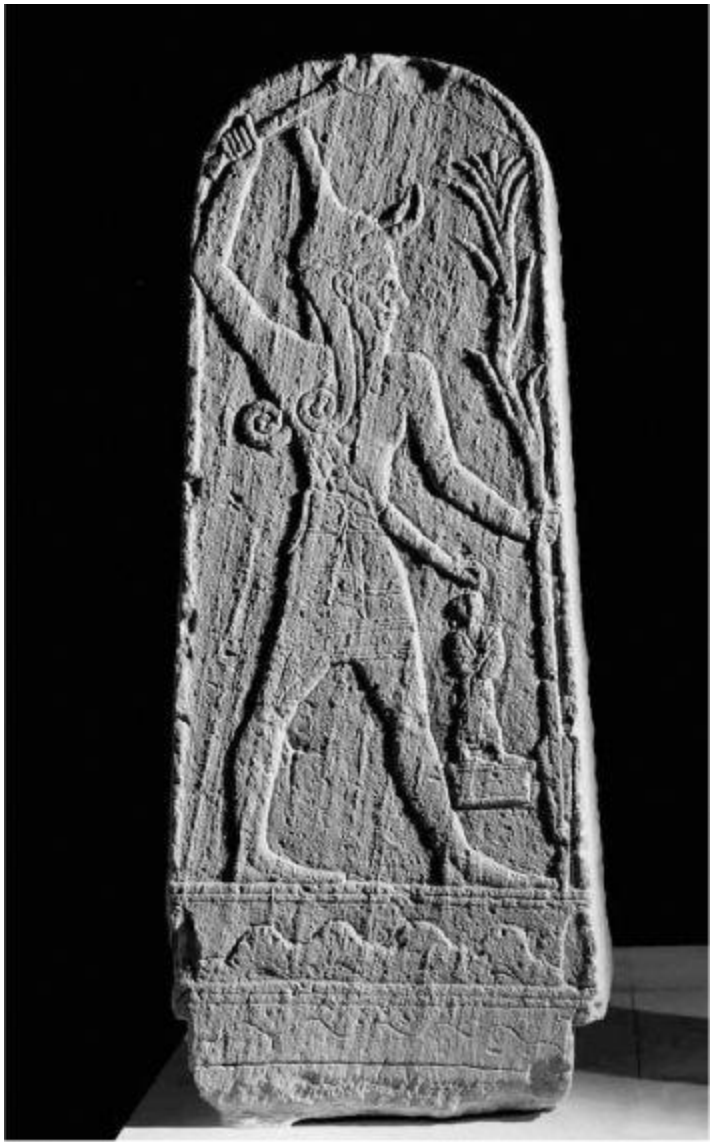
Astarte, Baal’s other self, your skull.

May you fall at the peak of your years,

in your prime may you be humbled.”

A note written on the left-hand side of the tablet includes the name of the scribe and his title:

Scribe: Ilimilku the officiant . . .



A limestone stela depicting the god Baal, about 4.5 feet (1.4 m) high and dating to the fifteen to the thirteenth century BCE. Baal is in a warlike posture, holding a club in his raised right hand and a downturned spear sprouting vegetation in his left. The smaller figure in the background, under Baal's dagger, may be the king. **(Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY)**

BAAL

INTRODUCTION

"Our king is Baal the Conqueror." This affirmation is the theme of the *Baal* cycle. *Kirta* describes the role of the human king of a Canaanite city-state; the six tablets that contain Ilimilku's version of *Baal* narrate the story of Baal's rise to kingship over the gods by his defeat of the forces of destruction, Sea and Death. The struggles through which Baal proved himself and the challenges that he met reflect the process by which Baal became the most important deity in Ugaritic religion. Apart from the texts translated here, seven other tablets, all in bad condition, contain variants and other episodes of the cycle, attesting to its importance and to the preeminence of its divine hero in Ugarit.

The first episode begins with Sea's demand that the Assembly of the gods surrender Baal to him. The council was terrified by the rude menacing approach of Sea's envoys, and

despite Baal's willingness to act as the gods' spokesperson, it was El, the head of the Assembly, who replied to the messengers and promised to hand Baal over to Sea. Baal's ambitions are evident: he would be the leader of the gods; his rebuke of them underlined his courage. But who was Sea, and why did the gods fear him? For an answer we must leave Ugarit and move to Mesopotamia, where the Babylonian work *Enuma Elish* provides some illuminating parallels.

***Enuma Elish*, named after its opening words, "When on high," is a long hymn celebrating the assumption of supreme power among the gods by Marduk, the national god of Babylon. It begins with a theogony, relating the origin of the pantheon from the mingling of the waters of Tiamat, the sea, and Apsu, the sweet water. The younger generations of gods were noisy and rambunctious, and Apsu complained:**

By day I find no relief, nor repose by night.

I will destroy, I will wreck their ways,

that quiet may be restored. Let us have rest!

His plans, however, were discovered, and he was killed by the other gods. This enraged Tiamat, and although she had earlier been unwilling to see her children put to death, now "she prepared for battle against the gods, her offspring." The gods were alarmed:

No god can go to battle and,

facing Tiamat, escape with his life.

The only deity strong enough to resist was Marduk, and he became the champion of the gods, receiving absolute authority in heaven and on earth.

The fuller account in the Babylonian poem provides the motivation for the gods' fear missing in the Ugaritic text. But there are differences. Tiamat, whose name means "sea," was female, while the Canaanite Prince Sea was male. Tiamat was the mother of the first generation of gods, and thus the ancestor of them all; Prince Sea's genealogy is uncertain. Finally, in contrast to the antagonism between Tiamat and Anu, the Mesopotamian sky god and El's counterpart, the relationship between Prince Sea and El is harmonious, as shown by one of Sea's epithets, "El's Darling"; since this same title is applied to Baal's other adversary, Death, and since it was El who promised to surrender Baal to Prince Sea, it may be that El and Sea were at least tacitly allied in wishing to dispose of the young god who was the latter's rival and who challenged the former's position as king.

Despite El's promise, Baal did not submit to Sea but fought with and defeated him, aided by two clubs fashioned by Kothar-wa-Hasis. Afterward Astarte proclaimed:

“Hail, Baal the Conqueror!

Hail, Rider on the Clouds!

Prince Sea is our captive,

Judge River is our captive.”

While the description of the battle between Baal and Sea is much terser than that of the contest between Marduk and Tiamat, the characteristics of Baal and Marduk are similar. Both are associated with the storm: Marduk’s name probably means “son of the storm,” and Baal’s title, “Rider on the Clouds,” recalls Marduk’s “storm chariot.” Before his contest Marduk had been proclaimed king of the gods, and during the feast that celebrated his victory his praises were sung by the divine Assembly. While Astarte’s proclamation is not yet a declaration of Baal’s kingship, words uttered later in the same context are “Sea is dead” and “May Baal reign!” These proclamations point, as does the Mesopotamian parallel, to the victory banquet at which Baal’s praises were sung.

Elsewhere in *Baal* other watery foes of Baal are mentioned in passing. One is Litan, whose biblical equivalent is Leviathan (see Job 41). Both are called “the fleeing serpent” and “the twisting serpent” (Isa. 27:1), and both have many heads (Ps. 74:14; cf. Rev. 12:3). Other figures associated with Sea include the Dragon (see Job 7:12; Isa. 51:9; cf. Rev. 13:1), Rabbim, and the Waves. All may belong to the next generation of watery enemies and are perhaps Sea’s offspring.

In the introduction we have seen that the language used of Baal as storm god is echoed in the description of Yahweh, the god of Israel, who

makes the clouds his chariot,

goes about on the wings of the wind,

makes the winds his messengers,

fire and flame his ministers.

(Ps. 104:3–4)

As Baal defeated Sea, so also did Yahweh:

With his power he stilled the sea,

with his skill he smote Rahab,

with his wind he bagged Sea,

his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

(Job 26:12–13)

Similar mythological language occurs in Psalm 89:9–10 and Isaiah 27:1.

Baal's adversary has the double title "Prince Sea" and "Judge River." "Sea" and "river" occur frequently in biblical poetry as parallel terms, and, as often in the Bible, "judge" means "ruler." Significant in this context is the application of this pair to the two bodies of water that Yahweh mastered, enabling his people to escape Egypt and enter Canaan:

When Israel came out of Egypt,

the house of Jacob from people of a different

language . . .

The sea saw and fled,

the Jordan turned back.

(Ps. 114:1, 3)

Just as the Reed Sea split so that the Israelites crossed on dry land, so too the Jordan miraculously stopped and the chosen people entered the promised land with dry feet (Exod. 14:22; Josh. 3:13). The repetition of the event is rooted in the old poetic formula: sea and river are two aspects of the same reality.

The *Baal* cycle continues with an interlude in which Anat, Baal's sister, showed her own prowess in battle. Because the top and bottom of the tablet have broken off, the relationship between this bloody scene with its fanciful sequel and the preceding and following episodes is not clear. It has been suggested that Anat's "battling in the valley" and her "fighting between the two cities" were part of Baal's engagement with Sea; Anat claims credit for the defeat of Baal's enemies in the following section. It may be more accurate to say that while Baal battles Sea on the cosmic plane, Anat battles human enemies on the earthly plane. Thus they may be viewed as allies. In any event, Baal sent messengers to Anat to announce his victory, urging her to cease fighting and to visit him.

This visit introduces the second, and longest, of the three episodes of the cycle, the one that recounts the construction of Baal's house. The term "house" must be understood on three levels. It refers in the first place simply to a home, a dwelling. But since Baal was a god, his house was also a temple. Most important, although he had demonstrated his supremacy by defeating Sea, Baal could not be considered a king unless he had a royal palace; this is the reason for El's rejection of Baal's claim to kingship:

Baal has no house like the other gods,

no court like Asherah's sons.

Apparently at Anat's insistence, El gave his permission for the construction by Kothar-wa-Hasis of a house for Baal; but El's wife Asherah, whose sons had royal ambitions themselves, also had to give her consent. The relations between Baal and Anat on one side and Asherah on the other were cool at best, but when Baal, bearing gifts, visited Asherah to ask for her approval of his building project, she was won over, and she joined Anat in promoting the construction of a house for Baal. She furthermore prophesied that when the building was complete, Baal's powers as god of the storm would be manifest:

Now Baal will provide his enriching rain,

provide a rich watering in a downpour;

and he will sound his voice in the clouds,

flash his lightning to the earth.

Permission having been granted, Kothar visited Baal to receive his instructions, and then the house was built, using the finest cedar in the Lebanon as well as gold, silver, and lapis lazuli. In a reverse alchemy, the precious construction materials turned into blocks and bricks after seven days of firing. Baal celebrated the erection of his palace by inviting the gods to a lavish banquet.

Alert readers may be puzzled by the illogic of these lines addressed to Baal:

Call a caravan into your house,

supplies inside your palace . . .

and build a house of silver and gold,

a house of purest lapis lazuli.

Since the theme of this episode is the construction of a house for Baal, it is strange for him to summon building materials to his house. This seems to be an example of the mechanical use of a formula consisting of the first two lines, and the inconsistency its use caused apparently did not trouble the Canaanites.

The construction of a house for the victorious storm god is also the sequel to Marduk's defeat of Tiamat in *Enuma Elish*. All the gods labored for one year to build Marduk's temple Esagila in the heart of Babylon; when their work was over, they sat down to a feast provided by their new king. The possession of a palace was thus a proof of royal status, and this is why it is emphasized in *Baal*. Before his defeat by Baal, Sea had also had a house built for him by Kothar; this is related in the first tablet of the cycle, not translated here because of its mutilated condition.

The temples on which the description of Baal's house is based were the primary analogues for the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, according to the Bible planned by David and built by his son Solomon. Solomon's architects and artisans were Phoenicians, who used cedar from the Lebanon for both the temple and the adjacent royal residence. The juxtaposition of temple and palace was deliberate: the deity guaranteed the dynasty and was purposely identified with it. This adoption of Canaanite theory and practice in the house of the god of Israel was responsible for prophetic opposition to the temple from before its construction and until the last days of its existence:

> **Thus says Yahweh: "Would you build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought the Israelites up from Egypt until today, but I walked among them with a tent as my divine home. In all the places I walked with the Israelites, did I ever say to one of Israel's leaders, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why haven't you built me a house of cedar?'"**
>
> **(2 Sam. 7:5–7)**

Despite such conservative resistance the temple was built, and at its dedication Solomon prayed to Yahweh using words that could have been addressed to Baal:

> **Give rain to your land, which you gave to your people as their inheritance.**
>
> **(1Kgs. 8:36)**

The acquisition of a house marks the climax of Baal's ascent to the kingship, a climax marked by his theophany in the storm and his assertion,

No other king or non-king

shall set his power over the earth.

Baal's centrality in Ugaritic religion is demonstrable. For instance, a significant index of popular beliefs is the use of divine elements in personal names; at Ugarit the most frequently occurring deity in names is Baal, including his other names and titles, such as Haddu.

The transfer of power from an older sky god to a younger storm god is attested in other contemporaneous eastern Mediterranean cultures. Cronus was imprisoned and succeeded by his son Zeus, Yahweh succeeded El as the god of Israel, the Hurrian god Teshub assumed kingship in heaven after having defeated his father Kumarbi, and Baal replaced El as the effective head of the Ugaritic pantheon. A more remote and hence less exact parallel is the replacement of Dyaus by Indra in early Hinduism. These similar developments can be accurately dated to the second half of the second millennium BCE, a time of prosperity and extraordinary artistic development but also of political upheaval and natural disasters that ended in the collapse or destruction of many civilizations, including the Mycenaean,

Minoan, Hittite, and Ugaritic. This was the period of the Trojan War, of the invasion of Egypt and the southeastern Mediterranean coast by the Sea Peoples, of the international unrest related in the Amarna letters.

In such a context a society might suppose that its traditional objects of worship had proved ineffective, that the pantheon in its established form had, like an entrenched royalty, become incapable of dealing with new challenges. At this point it might choose an extradynastic god, as Ugarit chose Baal, son of Dagan and not of El; and, beset by invasions from the sea and tidal waves arising from earthquakes, it might adopt a mythology in which the new god demonstrated his mastery over the sea.

We have omitted one aspect of the second episode of Baal because it serves as a transition to the third and final episode; this is the question of whether Baal's house should have a window. At first, despite Kothar-wa-Hasis's insistence, Baal refused to allow the installation of a window, but after the inaugural banquet and a successful military campaign (only briefly related), Baal changed his mind, and Kothar "opened a window in the house." Immediately thereafter Baal revealed himself as the storm god, declared his sovereignty, and specifically refused to pay the tribute that was apparently Death's due. The relationship between the window in Baal's house and Death is clarified by a verse in the book of Jeremiah, one of the rare references to Death by name in the Bible:

Death has come up through our windows,

he has entered our fortresses,

cutting down the children in the street

and the young men in the squares.

(Jer. 9:21)

This passage implies a popular superstition that Death entered a house through a window, and it may explain Baal's initial reluctance to include a window in his new house. Though recognized as king, Baal was unsure of his absolute power and preferred not to give Death an opportunity to enter. As we will see, this caution was justified. After his theophany Baal became bolder and rasher and sent his messengers to inform Death of the construction of his palace and presumably (though the text is broken here) of his refusal to pay tribute.

Thus the final episode of Baal begins, and it continues with Death's reply to Baal's delegation. Baal's defeat of Sea, here called Litan and the Serpent, had caused a cosmic collapse; Baal's punishment was that he had to go down into the throat of Death, whose insatiable appetite is vividly described; compare Isaiah 25:8, where, perhaps with deliberate irony, God will swallow Death. The sequence of the narrative for the remainder of the cycle is difficult to follow, since less than forty percent of the text is preserved and translatable. What remains is a series of scenes whose connections are often not clear.

Baal was intimidated by his messengers' report. Before surrendering to Death, however, he had sexual intercourse with "a heifer," whose identity is unclear; it may be a goddess thought

of as bovine, just as El is called "the Bull." Then Baal descended into the underworld, accompanied by his divine attendants and bringing with him the components of the storm—clouds, wind, lightning bolts, and rain. When news of Baal's death reached El, he began to mourn in typical Semitic fashion. Anat's response was the same, and together with Sun she buried her brother and offered a funerary sacrifice. El's words, repeated by Anat, are an indication of Baal's importance:

Baal is dead: what will happen to the peoples?

Dagan's son: what will happen to the masses?

The void resulting from Baal's death had to be filled; but neither of the two sons of Asherah who attempted to replace him succeeded in doing so.

The next scene describes two encounters between Anat and Death. In the first, Death told how he devoured Baal, and the consequences of this action are intimated: "the heavens shimmered because of the power of El's son Death." With the descent of the storm god into the underworld, the fatal forces of drought and sterility controlled the land; just as the health and prosperity of a city-state depended on the vitality of its ruler, so the survival of the earth and its inhabitants was bound up with the existence of "the Lord of the Earth." It was Anat who found the remedy:

She seized El's son Death:

with a sword she split him;

with a sieve she winnowed him;

with fire she burned him;

with millstones she ground him;

in the fields she sowed him.

Death suffered the various processes that grain has to undergo to make it edible and reproductive. How a seed is transformed into a new plant was a mystery to the ancients, but it was obviously due to tremendous force:

> **Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.**
>
> **(John 12:24)**

The death of Death led to Baal's revival; this too was a mystery, but nonetheless a fact: droughts ended, the rains came—Death died, Baal lived. What better way to express this mystery than to describe it in terms of a related phenomenon?

Anat's actions were effective: El had a prophetic dream in which a fabulous fertility was restored to nature, a sure sign of Baal's revival. At El's request, Sun, the all-seeing eye of heaven, began the search for Baal the Conqueror. "Where is the Prince?": this cry must have been part of Canaanite ritual, for it recurs as the name of Baal's devotee Jezebel, the Tyrian princess who became queen of Israel.

Having returned to life, Baal reasserted his power and reclaimed his throne. Then, after seven years, Death challenged him again. The *Baal* cycle ends as it began, with single combat. As neither of the fighters seemed to be winning, Sun intervened on Baal's behalf and frightened off Death with her threats. This repetition of the contest between Baal and Death shows that the defeat of the forces of sterility was not permanent. Drought could return, unpredictably and fiercely, once again destroying the fertility that Baal symbolized. The mention of the seven-year interval makes it clear that the struggle between Death and Baal was not annual, as were analogous struggles in the Greco-Roman world. The Mediterranean climate is in fact not characterized by alternating semiannual cycles of productivity and barrenness. Different crops grow in different seasons, and while the summer is rainless, it is not unproductive. But the failure of the winter rains is an agricultural disaster; it is this constant menace that the repetition of the struggle between Baal and Death reflects, that Danel's curse after Aqhat's death promised:

For seven years let Baal fail,

eight the Rider on the Clouds:

No dew, no showers,

no surging of the two seas,

no benefit of Baal's voice.

Although Sun had an important place in Ugaritic rituals, as witnessed by the lists of offerings, she has a major literary role only in *Baal*, where she helped Anat look for the dead Baal, searched for and found the revivified god, and intervened in his second contest with Death. The abrupt and puzzling ending to Ilimilku's version of *Baal* (or at least to as much of the cycle as has been preserved) may be a final speech to Baal or some other figure within the story, or it may address the royal patron of the story and his family.

Baal

TABLET 1

The first and sixth columns of this six-columned tablet are lost; the other columns are very badly damaged. Like tablet 6, this tablet would have begun with the scribal title for the series of tablets about Baal: "Belonging to *Baal*." From what can be read, column 2 contains a conversation between El and Sea about his enemy Baal: Sea must defeat him. In column 3, El and Asherah proclaim Sea's kingship. In column 4, El sends messengers to Kothar-wa-Hasis, the craftsman god, to construct a palace for Sea, which will mark his kingship; this scene is paralleled in another rather large fragment often assumed to belong to this cycle of texts. In column 5, El sends his messengers to tell Anat to desist from war, which she presumably would conduct on behalf of her brother, Baal. Many scholars have understood the order of columns differently, with El's message to Anat beginning the action.

TABLET 2

What survives of this tablet is a large fragment with more than forty lines preserved on each side. What most scholars consider the front has only one column and describes the surrender of Baal to Sea by El and the divine Assembly. The other side presents Baal's battle and ultimate victory over Sea.

Column 1

There are ten damaged lines before the text becomes clear. Like tablet 6, the top of this tablet would have begun with the scribal title for the series of tablets about Baal: "Belonging to *Baal*." These lines may include a message from Baal presented to Sea, including a curse spoken in the very same form as the curse at the end of *Kirta*.

When the text becomes clearer, Sea sends instructions to his messengers.

Sea sent two messengers . . .

The second halves of lines 11 and 12 are damaged.

“Leave, lads, do not delay;

now head to the Assembly in council, to the midst of Mount Lalu.

15**Do not fall at El’s feet,**

do not prostrate yourselves before the Assembly in council;

still standing speak your speech,

recite your message;

and address the Bull, my father El,

recite to the Assembly in council:

‘Message of Sea, your master,

your lord, Judge River:

Give up, gods, the one you obey,

the one you obey, O multitude;

give up Baal that I may humble him,

the son of Dagan that I may inherit his gold.’”

The lads left; they did not delay;

they headed to the midst of Mount Lalu,

to the Assembly in council.

There the gods had sat down to eat,

the holy ones to a meal;

Baal was standing by El.

As soon as the gods saw them,

saw the messengers of Sea,

the legation of Judge River,

the gods lowered their heads

to the top of their knees,

and onto their princely seats.

Baal rebuked them:

“Gods, why have you lowered your heads

to the top of your knees,

and onto your princely seats?

Together will you gods answer

the communication of the messengers of Sea,

of the legation of Judge River?

Gods, raise your heads

from the top of your knees,

from your princely seats.

For I myself will reply to the messengers of Sea,

the legation of Judge River.”

The gods raised their heads

from the top of their knees,

from their princely seats.

Then the messengers of Sea arrived,

30the legation of Judge River.

They did not fall at El’s feet,

they did not prostrate themselves before the Assembly in council;

still standing they spoke their speech,

they recited their message.

They looked like a fire, or two;

their tongues were like sharpened swords.

They addressed the Bull, his father El:

“Message of Sea, your master,

your lord, Judge River:

Give up, gods, the one you obey,

35**the one you obey, O multitude;**

give up Baal so that I may humble him,

the son of Dagan that I may inherit his gold.”

And the Bull, his father El, replied:

“Sea, Baal is your servant;

River, Baal is your servant,

the son of Dagan your prisoner.

He will bring you tribute,

like the gods, he will bring you payment,

like the holy ones, gifts.”

Then Prince Baal was shaken;

in his hand a striker,

in his right hand a slayer . . .

. . . Anat seizes,

his left hand Astarte seizes.

Lines 40–48 contain several words that seem to continue the description of the divine council’s restraint of Baal.

Columns 2 and 3

Column 2 preserves lines with only a handful of letters. Column 3 is badly damaged. It relates two conversations. In the first, El asks Kothar wa-Hasis to build a palace for

Sea, generally a mark of kingship. In the second, Sun tells Athtar to desist from any aspirations to kingship.

Column 4

The first five lines are damaged; they contain a speech continued in lines 6–7. A response also appears in those lines, evidently in support of Sea. The identity of the speakers is unclear.

5“The mighty will fall to the ground,

the powerful to the dust.”

These words had just come from his mouth,

this speech from his lips,

when she raised her voice:

“May he sink beneath Prince Sea’s throne.”

And Kothar-wa-Hasis spoke:

“Let me tell you, Prince Baal,

let me repeat, Rider on the Clouds:

Now, your enemy, Baal,

now you will kill your enemy,

now you will annihilate your foe.

10 You will take your eternal kingship,

your dominion forever and ever.”

Kothar fashioned two clubs,

and he pronounced their names:

“As for you, your name is Driver:

Driver, drive Sea,

drive Sea from his throne,

River from the seat of his dominion.

Swoop from Baal’s hands,

like a vulture from his fingers.

Strike Prince Sea on the shoulder,

Judge River between the arms.”

The club swooped from Baal’s hands,

like a vulture from his fingers.

It struck Prince Sea on the shoulder,

Judge River between the arms.

Sea was strong; he did not sink;

his joints did not shake,

his frame did not collapse.

Kothar fashioned two clubs,

and he pronounced their names:

“As for you, your name is Chaser:

Chaser, chase Sea,

chase Sea from his throne,

River from the seat of his dominion.

Swoop from Baal’s hands,

like a vulture from his fingers.

Strike Prince Sea on the skull,

Judge River between the eyes;

Sea will stumble,

he will fall to the ground.”

The club swooped from Baal’s hands,

like a vulture from his fingers.

25It struck Prince Sea on the skull,

Judge River between the eyes.

Sea stumbled;

he fell to the ground;

his joints shook,

his frame collapsed.

Baal captured and pierced Sea;

he finished off Judge River.

Astarte shouted to him by name:

“Hail, Baal the Conqueror!

Hail, Rider on the Clouds!

Prince Sea is our captive,

30Judge River is our captive.”

Lines 31–41 are broken. These lines include the proclamations “Sea is dead” and “May Baal reign!” From events in tablet 4, it seems that Baal’s kingship is only later accepted by the whole divine Assembly, and in particular by El.

TABLET 3

There are six columns to this tablet, three on each side. The front of the tablet is missing about twenty-five lines along much of the top, while the back of the tablet is missing nearly the same number of lines from the bottom.

Column 1

Lines 1–2 are mostly lost. Like tablet 6, this tablet would have begun with the scribal title for the series of tablets about Baal: "Belonging to *Baal*." That the column then began with a speech is evident from the words that remain. When the text becomes clearer, Baal is having a victory feast.

He served Baal the Conqueror,

he waited on the Prince, the Lord of the Earth:

He arose, prepared food, and gave it to him to eat;

he carved a breast before him,

with a sharp knife, a cut of a fatling;

he got up, set out a feast, and gave him a drink;

he put a cup in his hand,

a goblet in both his hands:

a large beaker, manifestly great,

a jar to astound a mortal,

a holy cup women should not see,

a goblet Asherah must not set her eye on.

He took a thousand jugs of wine,

he mixed ten thousand in his mixing bowl.

He arose, sang, chanted a song,

with cymbals in the minstrel’s hands;

the Hero sang with a sweet voice

of Baal on the heights of Zaphon.

Baal looked at his girls,

he set his eye on Pidray, maid of light,

also on Tallay, maid of rain.

Lines 25–28 are unclear, and there are about a dozen lines missing from the bottom of the column.

Column 2

About twenty-five lines are missing, and the first surviving line has only a single letter. Some of the missing lines must have contained a description of Anat's preparations for battle, because lines 2–3 end a section describing them.

Henna enough for seven girls,

scented with coriander and murex.

The gates of Anat's house were closed,

and she met the lads at the foot of the mountain.

And behold, Anat battled in the valley,

she fought between the two cities:

She killed people of the coast,

she annihilated men of the east.

Heads rolled under her like balls,

hands around her like locusts,

warrior hands like swarms of grasshoppers.

She fastened heads to her back,

she tied hands to her belt.

She harvested knee-deep in soldiers' blood,

up to her thighs in warriors' gore;

with a staff she drove off her enemies,

with the string of her bow her opponents.

Then Anat went to her house,

the goddess took herself to her palace,

not satisfied with her battling in the valley,

with her fighting between the two cities.

She arranged chairs for the warriors,

she arranged tables for the army,

stools for the heroes.

She battled hard, and looked,

Anat fought, and saw:

Her belly swelled with laughter,

her heart was filled with joy,

Anat's belly with victory,

as she harvested knee-deep in soldiers' blood,

up to her thighs in the warriors' gore,

until she was satisfied with her battling in the house,

her fighting between the tables.

The soldiers' blood was wiped from the house,

oil of peace was poured from a bowl.

Maiden Anat washed her hands,

the Mistress of the Peoples her fingers;

she washed the soldiers' blood from her hands,

the warriors' gore from her fingers.

She arranged chairs with chairs,

tables with tables;

she arranged stools with stools.

She drew water and washed,

in the heavens’ dew, the earth’s oil,

40the rain of the Rider on the Clouds,

dew that the heavens pour,

rain that the stars pour out.

Column 3

1She beautified herself with murex,

from a thousand fathoms in the vast expanse of the sea.

About twenty lines are missing.

5. . . she set her lyre to her chest,

for a song of the love of Baal the Conqueror,

the love of Pidray, maid of light,

the desire of Tallay, maid of rain,

the love of Arsay, maid of the wide world.

Meanwhile Baal instructs his messengers:

“So then, lads, enter:

At Anat’s feet bow down and adore,

prostrate yourselves, honor her,

and say to the Maiden Anat,

recite to the Mistress of the Peoples:

‘Message of Baal the Conqueror,

word of the Conqueror of Warriors:

Remove war from the earth,

set love in the ground,

pour peace into the heart of the earth,

tranquillity into the heart of the fields.

Hasten! Hurry! Rush!

Run to me with your feet,

20race to me with your legs.

For I have a word to tell you,

a message to recount to you:

the word of the tree and the whisper of the stone,

the murmur of the heavens to the earth,

25of the seas to the stars.

I understand the lightning that the heavens do not know,

the word that people do not know,

and earth's masses cannot understand.

Come, and I will reveal it:

in the midst of my mountain, divine Zaphon,

30in the sanctuary, in the mountain of my inheritance,

in the pleasant place, in the hill of my victory.'"

Two horizontal scribal lines divide this speech from the following section. The narrative skips over the journey of Baal's messengers to Anat.

As soon as Anat saw the gods,

her feet shook,

her back convulsed,

her face broke out in sweat,

her joints trembled,

her vertebrae weakened.

She raised her voice and declared:

“Why have Gapn and Ugar come?

What enemy has risen against Baal,

what foe against the Rider on the Clouds?

Didn’t I demolish El’s Darling, Sea?

Didn’t I finish off the divine River, the Mighty?

Didn’t I snare the Dragon and destroy him?

I demolished the Twisting Serpent,

the seven-headed monster.

I demolished El’s Darling, Desire,

I annihilated the divine calf, the Rebel;

45I demolished El’s bitch, Fire,

I finished off El’s daughter, Zebub.

I battled for the silver,

I took possession of the gold.

Column 4

1Has Baal been driven from the peak of Zaphon,

made to flee like a bird from his royal throne,

from his resting place, from the seat of his dominion?

What enemy has risen against Baal,

what foe against the Rider on the Clouds?”

5Then the lads replied:

“No enemy has risen against Baal,

no foe against the Rider on the Clouds.

‘Message of Baal the Conqueror,

word of the Conqueror of Warriors:

Remove war from the earth,

set love in the ground,

10pour peace into the heart of the earth,

tranquillity into the heart of the fields.

Hasten! Hurry! Rush!

Run to me with your feet,

race to me with your legs.

For I have a word to tell you,

a message to recount to you:

15the word of the tree and the whisper of the stone,

the word that people do not know,

and earth's masses cannot understand:

the murmur of the heavens to the earth,

of the seas to the stars;

I understand the lightning that the heavens do not know.

Come, and I will reveal it:

in the midst of my mountain, divine Zaphon,

20in the sanctuary, in the mountain of my inheritance.'"

Maiden Anat replied,

the Mistress of the Peoples answered:

"I will remove war from the earth,

I will set love in the ground,

I will pour peace into the heart of the earth,

25tranquillity into the heart of the fields.

Let Baal set his thunderbolts . . .

I will remove war from the earth,

I will set love in the ground,

I will pour peace into the heart of the earth,

tranquillity into the heart of the fields.

And I have something else to tell you:

Go, go, divine powers;

you are slow, but I am swift.

Is not my mountain certainly far, O gods,

Inbubu far, divine ones?

Two fathoms under the earth's springs,

three lengths under the caves."

Then she headed to Baal on the peak of Zaphon,

a thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step.

Baal saw his sister coming,

his father's daughter approaching;

he dismissed his wives from his presence.

He put an ox before her,

a fatling right in front of her.

She drew water and washed,

in the heavens' dew, the earth's oil,

dew that the heavens pour,

rain that the stars pour out.

45She beautified herself with murex,

from a thousand fathoms in the vast expanse of the sea.

About twenty lines are missing, which cover any pleasantries that may transpire between Anat and Baal. Baal informs his sister of his complaint over his proper palace to mark his victory over Sea and his status as divine king. Based on parallel passages, it is evident that when the text resumes, it continues Baal's lament over his lack of a palace.

"But Baal has no house like the other gods,

no court like Asherah's sons:

El's home is his son's shelter,

Lady Asherah of the Sea's home,

the home of Pidray, maid of light,

the shelter of Tallay, maid of rain,

the home of Arsay, maid of the wide world,

the home of the beautiful brides.”

Maiden Anat replied:

“My father, El the Bull, will answer me,

he’ll answer me . . . or else,

Column 5

I’ll push him to the ground like a lamb.

I’ll make his gray hair run with blood,

his gray beard with gore,

unless he gives Baal a house like the other gods,

and a court like Asherah’s sons.”

She stamped her feet and left the earth.

Then she headed to El

at the source of the two rivers,

in the midst of the channels of the two deeps;

she arrived at El's encampment,

the tent of the King, the Father of Time. . . .

Lines 8–16 are broken.

Sun, the Gods' Torch, burned,

the heavens shimmered

because of the power of Death, El's Darling.

Maiden Anat spoke:

20"Don't rejoice in your well-built house,

in your well-built house, El,

don't rejoice in the height of your palace.

Or else I will seize it . . . with my mighty arm.

I’ll smash your head,

I’ll make your gray hair run with blood,

25your gray beard with gore.”

El replied from the seven rooms,

from the eight enclosures:

“I know you, daughter, how furious you are,

that among goddesses there is no restraining you;

what do you want, Maiden Anat?”

And Maiden Anat replied:

30“Your decree is wise, El,

your wisdom is eternal,

a lucky life is your decree.

But our king is Baal the Conqueror,

our judge, higher than all:

all of us must bear his chalice,

all of us must bear his cup.

35In lament he declares to the Bull El, his father,

to El the King who brought him into being;

he declares to Asherah and her sons,

to the goddess and her pride of lions:

‘But Baal has no house like the other gods,

no court like Asherah’s sons:

40El’s home is his son’s shelter,

Lady Asherah of the Sea’s home,

the home of Pidray, maid of light,

the shelter of Tallay, maid of rain,

the home of Arsay, maid of the wide world,

the home of the beautiful brides.’”

About twenty-two lines are missing.

Column 6

About ten lines are missing, and the first six lines are badly damaged. These are partially supplied, thanks to the recent recognition that a previously unidentified fragment belongs here. Baal decides to seek Asherah's support for his palace. To this end he instructs his messengers to travel to Kothar, the craftsman god.

1"... a gift for Lady Asherah of the Sea,

a present for the Mother of the Gods,

that she may grant a house to Baal like the other gods,

a court like Asherah's sons . . ."

5Aloud to his lads Baal declared:

Lines 7–15 are obscure.

"Cross Byblos, cross Qaal,

cross to the islands on the far horizon;

10proceed, Asherah's Fisherman;

advance, Holy and Most Blessed One;

then you shall head to great and wide Egypt,

to Caphtor, the seat of his enthronement,

Egypt, the land of his inheritance.

A thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step,

at Kothar's feet bow down and fall,

prostrate yourself and honor him;

and speak to Kothar-wa-Hasis,

recite to the Skillful Craftsman:

'Message of Baal the Conqueror . . .'"

About twenty-lines are missing. They contained the rest of Baal's message to Kothar, including his complaint about his lack of a palace and his request that Kothar produce gifts for Asherah, which is repeated by Baal's messengers in Kothar's presence at the opening of the next tablet.

TABLET 4

Column 1

About twenty lines are missing, and the first three lines are damaged. Like tablet 6, this tablet would have begun with the scribal title for the series of tablets about Baal: "Belonging to *Baal*." The text resumes in the middle of Baal's messengers' delivering his message to Kothar.

"In lament he declares to the Bull El, his father,

to El the King who created him;

he declares to Asherah and her sons,

to the goddess and her pride of lions:

'For Baal has no house like the other gods,

no court like Asherah's sons:

El's home is his son's shelter,

Lady Asherah of the Sea's home,

the home of the beautiful brides,

the home of Pidray, maid of light,

the shelter of Tallay, maid of rain,

the home of Arsay, maid of the wide world.’

I have something else to tell you:

Prepare gifts for Lady Asherah of the Sea,

presents for the Mother of the Gods.”

The Skillful One went up to the bellows,

Hasis took the tongs in his hands;

he cast silver, he poured gold:

he cast silver by the thousands,

he cast gold by the ten thousands.

He cast a canopy and a reclining couch,

a divine dais worth twenty thousand,

a divine dais decorated with silver,

laminated with a layer of gold;

a divine seat set on top of it;

35**a divine stool covered with electrum;**

divine sandals with straps,

which he plated with gold;

a divine table filled with figures,

40**creatures of the earth’s foundations;**

a divine bowl with flocks like Amurru’s,

figured like the beasts of Yaman,

where there are wild oxen by the ten-thousands.

Two horizontal lines mark off the end of this column.

Column 2

About twenty lines are missing, and the first two lines are badly damaged, with the only legible word being “stone.” When the text becomes clear, Asherah is at her domestic chores.

She took her spindle in her hand,

an exalted spindle in her right hand.

As for her garment that covered her flesh,

she threw her robe into the sea,

her two garments into the river.

She put a pot on the fire,

a caldron on top of the coals.

She would implore the Bull, El the

Compassionate,

entreat the Creator of Creatures.

Then she raised her eyes and looked:

Asherah saw Baal coming,

Maiden Anat coming,

the Mistress of the Peoples approaching.

Her feet shook,

her back convulsed,

her face broke out in sweat,

her joints trembled,

her vertebrae weakened.

She raised her voice and declared:

“Why has Baal the Conqueror arrived?

Why has the Maiden Anat arrived?

Would you kill me or my sons?

Or finish off my pride of lions?”

But then Asherah saw the gleam of the silver,

the gleam of the silver and the shine of the gold.

Lady Asherah of the Sea was glad;

she called to her lad:

“Look at the marvelous gifts,

Lady Asherah of the Sea’s Fisherman:

take your net in your hand . . .”

Sixteen damaged lines follow.

Column 3

About twelve lines are missing from the top of this column, and the first nine lines are too damaged to translate. When the text becomes clear, Baal is recounting degrading events in the divine Assembly.

Baal the Conqueror answered,

the Rider on the Clouds replied:

“. . . He arose and spat at me

in the midst of the Assembly of the gods.

Filth has been set on my table,

bilge in my drinking cup.

Baal hates two kinds of banquets,

the Rider on the Clouds hates three:

a shameful banquet,

a degrading banquet,

a banquet with lewd maidservants.

Here is shameful behavior;

here are lewd maidservants.”

After Baal the Conqueror had arrived,

Maiden Anat arrived,

they gave gifts to Lady Asherah of the Sea,

they gave presents to the Mother of the Gods.

But Lady Asherah of the Sea said:

“Why do you give gifts to Lady Asherah of the Sea,

presents to the Mother of the Gods?

Have you given gifts to the Bull, El the Compassionate,

or presents to the Creator of Creatures?”

But Maiden Anat replied:

“We give gifts to you, Lady Asherah of the Sea,

presents to the Mother of the Gods. . . .”

Nineteen very damaged lines follow. Idioms for divine feasting and drinking are evident, suggesting that Asherah provides a banquet for Baal and Anat after their conversation.

Column 4

About twelve lines are missing. When the narrative resumes, it is evident that Asherah has agreed to the request of Baal and Anat to intercede with El on Baal’s behalf.

And Lady Asherah of the Sea replied:

“Listen, Holy and Most Blessed One, Lady Asherah of the Sea’s Fisherman:

Saddle an ass, harness a donkey,

attach silver reins,

a golden bridle,

fasten reins to my she-ass.”

The Holy and Most Blessed One obeyed;

he saddled the ass, harnessed the donkey,

10he attached silver reins,

a golden bridle,

he fastened reins to the she-ass.

The Holy and Most Blessed One lifted her,

he put Asherah on the ass’s back,

15on the beautiful back of the donkey.

The Holy One began to lead,

the Most Blessed One like a guiding star.

Maiden Anat followed her,

as Baal left for the peak of Zaphon.

20Then she headed to El

at the source of the two rivers,

in the midst of the channels of the two deeps.

She came to the encampment of El and entered

the tent of the King, the Father of Time.

At El's feet she bowed and lowered herself;

she prostrated herself and honored him.

As soon as El saw her,

his brow relaxed and he laughed;

he put his feet on a stool,

his fingers twirled with excitement.

He raised his voice and declared:

"Why has Lady Asherah of the Sea arrived?

why has the Mother of the Gods come?

Are you hungry . . . or thirsty . . . ?

Eat, please drink:

eat some food from the table,

drink some wine from the goblet,

blood of the vine from the golden cup.

Or does El the King's passion excite you?

does the love of the Bull arouse you?"

40But Lady Asherah of the Sea replied:

"Your decree is wise, El,

your wisdom is eternal,

a lucky life is your decree.

But Baal the Conqueror is our king,

our judge, higher than all.

45All of us must bear his chalice,

all of us must bear his cup.

In lament he declares to the Bull El, his father,

to El the King who brought him into being;

he declares to Asherah and her sons,

to the goddess and her pride of lions:

‘But Baal has no house like the other gods,

no court like Asherah’s sons:

El’s home is his son’s shelter,

Lady Asherah of the Sea’s home,

the home of the beautiful brides,

the home of Pidray, maid of light,

the shelter of Tallay, maid of rain,

the home of Arsay, maid of the wide world.’”

But El the Kind, the Compassionate, replied:

“So am I a servant, a slave of Asherah?

So am I a servant who handles a tool,

or a slave-girl of Asherah who molds bricks?

Column 5

Let a house be built for Baal like the other gods,

a court like Asherah's sons."

And Lady Asherah of the Sea replied:

"You are great, El, you are truly wise;

your gray beard truly instructs you. . . .

Now Baal will provide his enriching rain,

provide a rich watering in a downpour;

and he will sound his voice in the clouds,

flash his lightning to the earth.

Let him complete his house of cedar!

Let him construct his house of bricks!

Let it be announced to Baal the Conqueror:

'Call a caravan into your house,

supplies into your palace;

the mountains will bring you much silver,

the hills fine gold in abundance;

the best ore will be brought to you:

and build a house of silver and gold,

a house of purest lapis lazuli.’”

Maiden Anat was glad;

she stamped her feet and left the earth.

Then she headed to Baal on the peak of Zaphon,

a thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step.

Maiden Anat laughed;

she raised her voice and declared:

“Receive the good news, Baal;

good news is brought to you:

A house will be built for you like your brothers,

and a court like your kinsmen.

Call a caravan into your house,

supplies into your palace;

the mountains will bring you much silver,

the hills fine gold in abundance:

and build a house of silver and gold,

35a house of purest lapis lazuli.”

Baal the Conqueror was glad;

he called a caravan into his house,

supplies into his palace;

the mountains brought him much silver,

the hills fine gold in abundance;

40the best ore was brought to him.

He sent messengers to Kothar-wa-Hasis.

Separated by scribal lines, a note here is given to the reciter of the tablet to add at this point the formulas for describing the journey of Baal’s messengers to Kothar-wa-Hasis, their delivery of the message, and Kothar’s journey to Baal.

Now go back to the passage: “When the lads were sent.”

The narrative resumes.

After Kothar-wa-Hasis had arrived,

Baal put an ox before him,

a fatling right in front of him.

A chair was brought, and he was seated

at the right hand of Baal the Conqueror,

as the god ate and drank.

Baal the Conqueror spoke . . .

“Kothar, hurry a house;

hurry, erect a palace;

hurry, you must build a house;

hurry, you must raise a palace

on the heights of Zaphon.

Let the house extend over a thousand fields,

the palace over ten thousand acres.”

And Kothar-wa-Hasis replied:

“Listen, Baal the Conqueror,

pay attention, Rider on the Clouds:

I should put an opening in the house,

a window in the palace.”

But Baal the Conqueror replied:

“Don’t put an opening in the house,

a window in the palace.”

Column 6

But Kothar-wa-Hasis replied:

“You’ll recall my words, Baal.”

And Kothar-wa-Hasis repeated:

“Listen, Baal the Conqueror:

I should put an opening in the house,

a window in the palace.”

But Baal the Conqueror replied:

“Don’t put an opening in the house,

a window in the palace.”

Lines 10–13 are highly damaged. They apparently give Baal’s reasons for declining Kothar’s suggestion. Baal refers to Pidray and Tallay, two of his girls, as well as the figure of Sea and apparently how he spat on Baal.

But Kothar-wa-Hasis replied:

“You’ll recall my words, Baal.”

They built his house,

they erected his palace;

they went to the Lebanon for wood,

to Sirion for the finest cedar;

there—to the Lebanon for wood,

to Sirion for the finest cedar!

Fire was set in the house,

flames in the palace.

One day passed, then two:

The fire burned in the house,

the flames in the palace.

Three days passed, then four:

The fire burned in the house,

the flames in the palace.

Five days passed, then six:

The fire burned in the house,

the flames in the palace.

Then, on the seventh day,

the fire went out in the house,

the flames in the palace:

The silver had turned into blocks,

the gold had become bricks.

Baal the Conqueror was glad:

“I have built my house of silver,

my palace of gold.”

Baal made preparations in his house,

Haddu made preparations in his palace:

he slaughtered oxen as well as sheep;

he felled bulls, fatling rams,

calves a year old, lambs of the flock, with kids.

He invited his brothers into his house,

his kinsmen in his palace;

he invited Asherah’s seventy sons.

He gave the gods lambs;

he gave the goddesses ewes;

he gave the gods oxen;

he gave the goddesses cows;

he gave the gods seats;

he gave the goddesses thrones;

he gave the gods a vat of wine;

he gave the goddesses a cask of wine.

Until the gods ate and drank their fill,

he gave them sucklings to eat,

with a sharp knife, a cut of a fatling.

They drank wine from goblets,

blood of the vine from golden cups. . . .

Lines 60–64 are unintelligible.

Column 7

One line may be missing, and lines 1–6 are broken. When the text becomes clear, Baal is on a victory tour.

He crossed from town to town,

he toured from village to village.

Baal captured sixty-six cities,

seventy-seven towns;

Baal sacked eighty,

Baal sacked ninety;

Baal returned to his house.

And Baal the Conqueror said:

“I will put it in, Kothar, son of Sea,

Kothar, son of the Confluence:

let a window be opened in the house,

an opening in the palace;

so let a break be opened in the clouds,

as Kothar-wa-Hasis said.”

Kothar-wa-Hasis laughed;

he raised his voice and declared:

“Baal the Conqueror, didn’t I tell you:

‘You’ll recall my words, Baal’?”

He opened a window in the house,

an opening in the palace.

Then Baal opened a break in the clouds,

Baal sounded his holy voice,

Baal thundered from his lips. . . .

The badly broken lines 30–34 continue Baal’s divine manifestation on earth.

the earth’s high places shook;

Baal’s enemies fled to the woods,

Haddu’s haters took to the mountains.

And Baal the Conqueror said:

“Haddu’s enemies, why are you quaking?

Why are you quaking, assailers of the Valiant One?”

Baal’s eye guided his hand,

as the cedar moved in his right hand.

So Baal was enthroned in his house:

“No other king or non-king

shall set his power over the earth.

I will send a messenger to El’s son Death,

an envoy to El’s Darling, the Hero,

that he may call to Death with his throat,

instruct the Darling with his innards.

For I alone rule over the gods;

I alone fatten gods and men;

I alone satisfy earth’s masses.”

Baal declared to his lads:

“Look, Gapn and Ugar . . .”

Lines 55–60 are poorly understood and preserved, and another seven lines are missing from the bottom of the column. This section presumably continues Baal’s instructions to his messengers that they are to deliver to Death. Death’s response continues in the following column.

Column 8

“Then head to Mount Targuziza,

to Mount Tharummagi,

to the mounds at the edge of the underworld.

Raise the mountain with your hands,

the hill on top of your palms.

Then go down to the isolation ward of the underworld,

you will be counted among those who go down into the earth.

Then head to the midst of his city, the Swamp,

the Pit, his royal house,

Filth, the land of his inheritance.

But, divine servants, be on your guard:

don’t approach El’s son, Death,

lest he put you in his mouth like a lamb,

crush you like a kid in his jaws.

Sun, the Gods’ Torch, burns,

the heavens shimmer

because of the power of Death, El’s Darling.

A thousand fields, ten thousand acres at each step,

at Death’s feet bow down and fall,

prostrate yourselves and honor him;

and speak to El’s son, Death,

recite to El’s Darling, the Hero:

‘Message of Baal the Conqueror,

word of the Conqueror of Warriors:

35I have built my house of silver,

my palace of gold. . . .’”

Lines 38–48 are too broken to translate, and another sixteen lines are missing. They presumably complete Baal’s proclamation of his kingship to Death and begin Death’s response to Baal’s messengers, which is delivered to Baal at the beginning of the next tablet.

The following scribal colophon is written on the left edge of the tablet:

The scribe: Ilimilku, officiant of Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit.

TABLET 5

Column 1

Death finishes his message to his messengers, continuing from the end of the preceding column and quoted later in the messengers’ delivery of the message. Death intends to destroy Baal, just as Baal had destroyed Litan, his cosmic watery enemy. Like tablet 6, this tablet would have begun with the scribal title for the series of tablets about Baal: “Belonging to *Baal*.”

“When you killed Litan, the Fleeing Serpent,

finished off the Twisting Serpent,

the seven-headed monster,

the heavens withered and weakened,

like the folds of your robe. . . .

Now you must descend into the throat of El’s son, Death,

into the watery depths of El’s Darling, the Hero.”

The gods left; they did not delay;

they headed to Baal on the peak of Zaphon.

Then Gapn and Ugar spoke:

“Message of El’s son, Death,

word of El’s Darling, the Hero:

‘So is my appetite like a lion’s in the wild,

or the desire of a dolphin in the sea?

Or is it like wild oxen that go to a pool,

deer that go to a spring?

Or truly does my appetite consume a heap-full?

So do I eat with both my hands,

or are my portions seven bowls' worth,

or does my cup contain a whole river?

So invite me, Baal, with my brothers,

summon me, Haddu, with my kinsmen,

to eat food with my brothers,

and drink wine with my kinsmen.

Let us drink . . . I will pierce you . . .

When you killed Litan, the Fleeing Serpent,

finished off the Twisting Serpent,

the seven-headed monster,

the heavens withered and weakened,

like the folds of your robe. . . .

Now you must descend into the throat of El's son, Death,

into the watery depths of El's Darling, the Hero.'"

About thirty lines are missing from the bottom of this tablet.

Column 2

About twelve lines are missing from the top of the column, and the first line is illegible. The column seems to belong to a speech that relates Baal's imminent demise. It would appear to reflect the decision of El or the divine Assembly that Baal must submit to Death. To judge from the following section, the speakers of this announcement to Baal may be the messengers who take his response to Death.

"One lip to the earth, one lip to the heavens;

. . . his tongue to the stars.

Baal must enter inside him;

he must go down into his mouth like a dried olive,

the earth's produce, the fruit of the trees."

Baal the Conqueror became afraid;

the Rider on the Clouds was terrified:

“Go, speak to El’s son Death,

recite to El’s Darling, the Hero:

‘Message of Baal the Conqueror,

word of the Conqueror of Warriors:

Hail, El’s son Death!

I am your servant, yours forever.’”

The gods left; they did not delay;

then they headed to El’s son Death,

to the midst of his city, the Swamp,

the Pit, his royal house,

Filth, the land of his inheritance.

They raised their voices and declared:

“Message of Baal the Conqueror,

word of the Conqueror of Warriors:

Hail, El's son Death!

20I am your servant, yours forever."

El's son Death was glad . . .

In the eight broken lines that follow, Death responds to the news of Baal's surrender. Another twenty-five lines are missing from the bottom of the column.

Column 3

This column is badly damaged, especially its right side, which is missing. From what is preserved, it includes a speech, apparently inviting Death to a feast of the divine Assembly.

Column 4

Like the preceding column, this one is missing its right side. It describes Baal coming to a feast, probably the same divine banquet to which Death is invited in the preceding column.

Column 5

About twenty-five lines are missing from the top of the tablet here, and the first three lines are damaged. When the text is legible, Death is commanding Baal's descent to the underworld, perhaps in the context of the feast of the divine Assembly.

"... I will put him into a great pit in the earth.

As for you, take your clouds,

your wind, your bolts, your rain;

take with you your seven lads,

your eight noble attendants;

take with you Pidray, maid of light;

take with you Tallay, maid of rain;

then head to Mount Kankaniya;

raise the mountain with your hands,

the hill on top of your palms;

then go down to the isolation ward of the underworld;

you will be counted among those who go down into the earth;

and the gods will know that you have died.”

Baal the Conqueror obeyed;

he loved a heifer in the pasture,

a young cow in the fields on Death’s shore:

He lay with her seventy-seven times,

she made him erect eighty-eight times;

and she became pregnant,

and she bore him a boy.

There are four damaged lines at this point, and another eleven lines are missing. From what the next column describes, and later from Death’s speech in column 2 of tablet 6, it is evident that after his sexual relations, Baal complies with Death’s command, and Death indeed devours him.

Column 6

About thirty lines are missing from the top of the column, and the first five lines are badly damaged. From what remains of them, it is evident that this column opens with a description of the journey of messengers to El. Because Anat is present later in this column, the context of the report may be the divine Assembly.

"We arrived at the lovely place, the desert pasture,

at the beautiful fields on Death's shore.

We came upon Baal:

he had fallen to the ground.

Baal the Conqueror has died,

the Prince, the Lord of the Earth, has perished."

Then El the Kind, the Compassionate,

came down from his throne, sat on his stool,

came down from his stool, sat on the ground.

He poured dirt on his head in mourning,

dust on his skull in lamentation;

he covered his loins with sackcloth.

He cut his skin with a stone,

made incisions with a razor;

he cut his cheeks and chin,

raked the length of his arms;

he plowed his chest like a garden,

he raked his back like a valley.

He raised his voice and declared:

“Baal is dead: what will happen to the peoples?

Dagan’s son: what will happen to the masses?

I will go down into the earth after Baal.”

Anat went about hunting

on every mountain in the heart of the earth,

on every hill in the heart of the fields.

She arrived at the lovely place, the desert pasture,

30at the beautiful fields on Death's shore.

she came upon Baal, fallen to the earth.

She covered her loins with sackcloth.

TABLET 6

Column 1

This column begins with the scribal title for the series of tablets about Baal.

1Belonging to *Baal*

She cut her skin with a stone,

made incisions with a razor;

she cut her cheeks and chin,

raked the length of her arms;

she plowed her chest like a garden,

raked her back like a valley:

“Baal is dead: what will happen to the peoples?

Dagan’s son: what will happen to the masses?

Let us go down into the earth after Baal.”

Sun, the Gods’ Torch, went down with her.

When she had finished weeping,

had drunk her tears like wine,

she declared to Sun, the Gods’ Torch:

“Lift Baal the Conqueror onto me!”

Sun, the Gods’ Torch, obeyed;

she lifted up Baal the Conqueror;

she put him on Anat's shoulders.

She brought him up to the heights of Zaphon;

she wept for him and buried him;

she put him into a great pit in the earth.

She slaughtered seventy wild oxen,

as an oblation for Baal the Conqueror.

She slaughtered seventy plow oxen,

as an oblation for Baal the Conqueror,

She slaughtered seventy sheep,

as an oblation for Baal the Conqueror.

She slaughtered seventy deer,

as an oblation for Baal the Conqueror.

She slaughtered seventy mountain goats,

as an oblation for Baal the Conqueror.

She slaughtered seventy asses,

as an oblation for Baal the Conqueror. . . .

Lines 30–31 are broken.

Then she headed to El at the source of the two rivers,

in the midst of the channels of the two deeps.

35She came to the encampment of El, and entered

the tent of the King, the Father of Time.

At El's feet she bowed and lowered herself,

she prostrated herself and honored him.

She raised her voice and declared:

40"Now let Asherah and her sons rejoice,

the goddess and her pride of lions:

For Baal the Conqueror has died,

the Prince, the Lord of the Earth, has perished."

El called to Lady Asherah of the Sea:

“Listen, Lady Asherah of the Sea:

Give me one of your sons,

so I may make him king.”

And Lady Asherah of the Sea replied:

“Why not make Yadi-Yalhan king?”

But El the Kind, the Compassionate, replied:

“He’s too weak to race;

he can’t compete in spear-throwing with Baal;

compared with Dagan’s son, he’d collapse.”

And Lady Asherah of the Sea replied:

“Why not make Athtar the Awesome king?

Let Athtar the Awesome be king!”

Then Athtar the Awesome

went up to the heights of Zaphon;

he sat on Baal the Conqueror’s throne.

His feet did not reach the footstool,

his head did not reach the headrest.

And Athtar the Awesome spoke:

“I can’t be king on the heights of Zaphon.”

Athtar the Awesome descended,

descended from the throne of Baal the Conqueror,

and he became king of the earth, the god of it all. . . .

Lines 66–67 are unclear.

Column 2

About thirty lines are missing, and lines 1–4 are too difficult to translate. The scene has switched to Anat and her desire to have Baal back from Death.

One day passed, then two;

and Maiden Anat approached him.

Like the heart of a cow for her calf,

like the heart of a ewe for her lamb,

so was Anat's heart for Baal.

10She seized Death by the edge of his clothes,

she grabbed him by the hem of his garment;

she raised her voice and declared:

"Come, Death, give me my brother!'"

And El's son Death replied:

"What do you want, Maiden Anat?

15I was taking a walk and wandering

on every mountain in the heart of the earth,

on every hill in the heart of the fields.

My appetite longed for human beings,

my appetite for earth's masses.

I arrived at my lovely place, the desert pasture,

at the beautiful fields on Death's shore.

I approached Baal the Conqueror;

I put him in my mouth like a lamb;

he was crushed like a kid in my jaws."

Sun, the Gods' Torch, burned;

the heavens shimmered

because of the power of Death, El's son.

One day passed, then two;

the days became months;

Maiden Anat approached him.

Like the heart of a cow for her calf,

like the heart of a ewe for her lamb,

so was Anat's heart for Baal.

She seized El's son Death:

with a sword she split him;

with a sieve she winnowed him;

with fire she burned him;

with millstones she ground him;

35in the fields she sowed him.

Birds ate his flesh;

fowl consumed his parts;

flesh cried out to flesh!

Two horizontal lines mark the end of this column.

Column 3

About forty lines of this column are missing, and the first line is damaged. The opening legible lines suggest that in the missing part of the tablet, El discusses the dream vision that he is about to have: if in his vision there are no signs of natural fertility, then Baal is still dead. The column opens then with El's consideration of the alternative.

“But if Baal the Conqueror lives,

if the Prince, the Lord of the Earth, has revived,

in the dream of El the Kind, the Compassionate,

in the vision of the Creator of Creatures,

the heavens rain down oil,

the wadis run with honey;

then I will know that Baal the Conqueror lives,

that the Prince, the Lord of the Earth, has revived.”

In the dream of El the Kind, the Compassionate,

in the vision of the Creator of Creatures,

the heavens rained down oil,

the wadis ran with honey.

El the Kind, the Compassionate, was glad:

he put his feet on a stool,

his brow relaxed and he laughed.

He raised his voice and declared:

“Now I can sit back and relax;

my heart inside me can relax;

20for Baal the Conqueror lives,

the Prince, the Lord of the Earth, is alive.”

El called to Maiden Anat:

“Listen, Maiden Anat:

Speak to Sun, the Gods’ Torch:

Column 4

1‘Sun, the furrows in the fields have dried,

the furrows in El’s fields have dried;

Baal has neglected the furrows of his plowland.

Where is Baal the Conqueror?

where is the Prince, the Lord of the Earth?’”

Maiden Anat left;

she headed to Sun, the Gods’ Torch;

she raised her voice and declared:

“Message of the Bull, El your father,

word of the Kind One, your parent:

Sun, the furrows in the fields have dried,

the furrows in El’s fields have dried;

Baal has neglected the furrows of his plowland.

Where is Baal the Conqueror?

where is the Prince, the Lord of the Earth?”

And Sun, the Gods’ Torch, replied:

“. . . I will look for Baal the Conqueror.”

And Maiden Anat replied:

“Wherever you go, Sun,

wherever you go, may El protect you,

may you be protected, Sun. . . .”

Lines 24–27 are damaged, and another thirty-five lines are missing. The following column presumes that the Sun’s search for Baal has been successful: he has returned to the realm of life.

Column 5

1Baal seized Asherah’s sons;

he struck Rabbim on the shoulder;

he struck Waves with his club;

he trampled burning Death to the ground.

5Baal returned to his royal throne,

to his resting place, the seat of his dominion.

The days became months;

the months became years.

Then, in the seventh year,

El's son Death spoke to Baal the Conqueror;

he raised his voice and declared:

"Baal, because of you I experienced shame:

because of you I experienced splitting with a sword;

because of you I experienced burning with fire;

because of you I experienced grinding with millstones;

because of you I experienced winnowing with a sieve;

because of you I experienced scattering in the fields;

because of you I experienced sowing in the sea.

Give me one of your brothers that I may eat,

and my anger will turn away.

If you do not give up one of your brothers . . . ,

then I will consume humans,

I will consume the multitudes of the earth."

Lines 26–28 are too damaged to translate, and about another twenty-five lines are missing.

Column 6

Lines 1–9 are too damaged to translate. The threat that Death utters at the end of the preceding column has not passed, and when this column becomes intelligible, Death seems to be complaining (perhaps to the divine Assembly) that Baal has caused him to devour his brothers rather than Baal.

10“See now, Baal gave my brothers for me to eat,

my mother’s sons for me to consume.”

He turned to Baal on the heights of Zaphon;

he raised his voice and declared:

15“Baal, you gave me my brothers to eat,

my mother’s sons for me to consume.”

They butted each other like champions;

Death was strong; Baal was strong.

They gored each other like wild oxen;

Death was strong; Baal was strong.

They bit each other like serpents;

Death was strong; Baal was strong.

They trampled each other like running animals;

Death fell; Baal fell.

Sun declared from above:

“Listen, El’s son Death:

How can you battle with Baal the Conqueror?

Will the Bull, El your father, continue to listen to you?

Surely he will undermine the foundations of your seat,

surely he will overturn your royal throne,

surely he will smash your scepter of judgment.”

El’s son Death became fearful;

El’s Darling, the Hero, was terrified;

Death was afraid of her voice.

He raised his voice and declared:

“Let Baal be enthroned on his royal throne,

on the resting place, the seat of his dominion.”

Lines 35–42 are unintelligible. They apparently complete the episode, perhaps with Baal gaining the upper hand. They may also introduce the following scene, which evidently refers to Sun’s journey through the underworld. Sun will have power over the divine dead known as the Rephaim, and Kothar-wa-Hasis will use his magic to protect against the power of the cosmic sea and its beasts. The actions of these deities, as well as the meal, may signal cosmic well-being. Since Sun and Kothar both help Baal over the course of the Baal cycle, perhaps it is Baal who is addressed below or who addresses the king. Baal may be invited to partake in a feast, with Sun and Kothar providing aid for him in the underworld.

“You may eat the sacrificial meal,

you may drink the offertory wine.

Sun rules the Rephaim,

Sun rules the divine ones:

Your company are the gods,

see, the dead are your company.

Kothar is your magician,

50and Hasis your diviner.

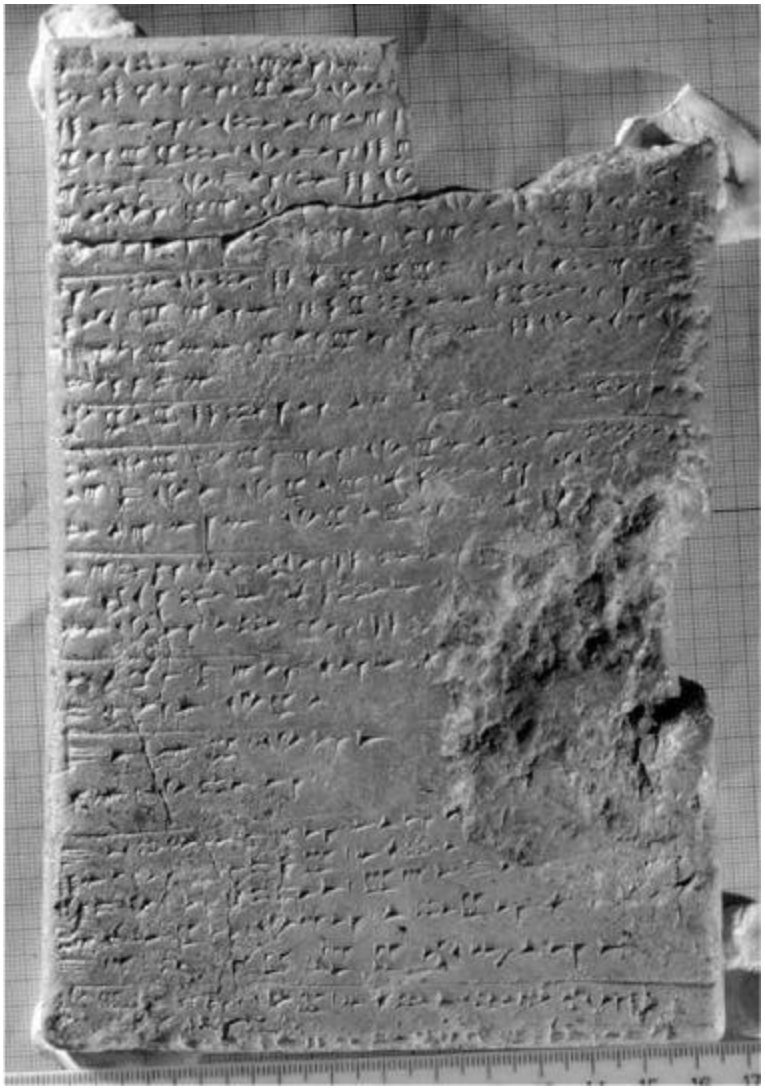
In Sea, it is Desire and the Dragon

whom Kothar-wa-Hasis expels,

Kothar-wa-Hasis banishes.”

Two horizontal lines separate the text from the following scribal colophon:

The scribe: Ilimilku from Shuban, student of Attanu, the diviner, chief of the priests, chief of the herdsmen, the officiant of Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit, master of Yargub, lord of Tharumani.



***The front side of the tablet containing* The Lovely Gods *(KTU 1.23). It is about 7.5 inches (19 cm) high and has clear dividing lines between sections of the text.* (Photograph by Bruce Zuckerman, West Semitic Research. Courtesy Louvre Museum.)**

THE LOVELY GODS

INTRODUCTION

Like the next text, this one is divided into two major parts, one prescriptive and one mythic. The prescriptions in the first part of *The Lovely Gods* are ritual instructions for the occasion, which is evoked by the myth of the second. *The Lovely Gods* differs from *Aqhat*, *Kirta,* and *Baal* in that the scribe who wrote this text did not provide it with a title or his own name. But the scribe did incise single lines running across the front of the tablet, indicating that lines 1–29 constitute a series of discrete instructions. In contrast, lines 30–76 have no such dividers and constitute a single unit. The physical evidence of the tablet indicates that it is a single text rather than a scribal combination of two texts (one on each side of the tablet), since the writing continues from the bottom of the front over the bottom edge and directly onto the back. Both the rituals and myths are centered on the Lovely Gods and the feast in which they take part. This theme

envelops the ritual section, and it forms the conclusion of the longer mythic narrative.

This observation has important implications for how the text should be understood. In the original edition of the text, it was called "The Birth of the Gracious and Beautiful Gods." This label captured only one aspect of the narrative section, the deities' births. In view of the central place of the feast of the Lovely Gods in both the rituals and longer mythic narrative, as well as the presence of smaller mythic elements in the rituals, the text may be called "The Rituals and Myths of the Lovely Gods." For the sake of brevity, we have called it *The Lovely Gods*.

There are nine parts in the ritual section. The first invites the "Lovely Gods" to a feast. From the desert or steppe, their apparent abode, they are invited to the feast, to be joined by the king and the queen along with their attendants.

The second ritual piece moves to the figure of Death. The initial image of the god is of an enthroned king, with royal scepters denoting his power in causing the deaths of children and husbands. The second image evokes a picture of Death's destruction, expressed in terms of a vine pruned, tied, and trimmed: thus Death is cut back and destroyed.

The third ritual piece, only one line long, gives instructions for the performance of a song. The content of this song is evidently mentioned by the fourth ritual piece, in lines 13–15. The first two lines of the song appear in line 13; perhaps it is the song's title. Lines 14–15 describe a ritual action of cooking. The recipe involves a mixture of "coriander in milk" and "mint in curd." Some earlier scholars thought that this recipe did not list "coriander in milk" but a "kid in milk" and therefore represented the Canaanite practice lying behind the prohibition

of Exodus 23:19 and Deuteronomy 14:21. While the translation "coriander" is correct, the larger context suggests a feast hardly limited to the ingredients mentioned in line 14. These ingredients apparently help to make the mix or sauce that is to be used on the meat evoked elsewhere in the rituals (specifically, the hunt in lines 16–18), not to mention the feast more generally in lines 6 and 71–72.

The fifth ritual piece seems to present a mythic allusion to the hunt of the goddess Rahmay, perhaps Anat. Like Anat and Astarte in *El's Drinking Party*, the goddess here hunts for game. This food on the divine plane would correspond to the food prepared in the ritual on the human plane. Both here and in the mythic presentation in lines 67–69, the desert is the zone involved: food provision is achieved through hunting in the desert in line 16, while food is seen as lacking in the desert in lines 67–69. Lines 17–18 are incomplete and difficult to understand.

Despite its damaged condition, the two-line unit that comprises the sixth ritual piece mentions a significant feature, the dwellings of the gods, suggesting that the gods in general are present at the ritual action, not just the Lovely Gods or the royal participants with their servants. Thus the ritual brings together both the destructive divine forces represented by the Lovely Gods and the beneficial deities.

The seventh ritual piece is very broken, and its significance unclear. The only sure word is "lapis lazuli." Thus the text brings color into the ritual. Accordingly, scholars have also seen "red" and "crimson" in this passage, though the words involved may be interpreted differently.

The eighth ritual piece reiterates the invitation to the Lovely Gods. It also mentions the royal officials, described as in a

procession with sacrifices. This form of the invitation does not mention the king and queen, but they are not necessarily absent from the ritual at this point. The invitation adds a lengthy title about the Lovely Gods (lines 23–24), acknowledging the goddess who suckles them at their birth. The story of their birth will be told in the longer narrative of lines 30–76, and so the invocation of the gods here evokes the mythic world of the second part of the text.

The ninth and final ritual piece reiterates the song of the third and also mentions in its broken last line the singers of the fourth.

The long mythic narrative of the second part begins with El's courtship of his two wives in lines 30–48. The description of this courtship is difficult to interpret, and it has led to opposing theories about El's "hand" (his penis). Scholars have debated whether El suffers from impotence (and thus needs a little ritual boost) or whether he remains a virile figure throughout this part of the text. He apparently has several erections, probably aided by little more than his attraction to the women. In any case, he has sexual relations with them. As a result, they bear him a pair of divine children named Dawn and Dusk in lines 49–54. *The Lovely Gods* does not present El as the old executive god of the universe, as we see him in *Baal* and probably *Kirta* and *Aqhat*. Instead, he appears here in the prime of his life at the beginning of the universe, when he sired his divine children. The other divine children are not mentioned because lines 30–54 function primarily as the backdrop to what follows in the narrative.

After the births of Dawn and Dusk, the narrative turns its attention to the Lovely Gods in lines 55–76. After their birth, these destructive divinities feed on life, with one lip to heaven and one to earth. Unlike Dawn and Dusk, they are ravenous; for this

reason, it seems unwise to identify the two pairs as some scholars have. The description of the massive appetite of these hungry gods echoes that of Death in *Baal* (tablet 5, column 2, lines 2–6). This suggests that their title, "the Lovely Gods," is euphemistic; they are, in fact, destructive and threatening.

As a result of their supersized appetite, the Lovely Gods are commanded by El to go to the desert for a period of seven years. Desperately hungry, the Lovely Gods ask for entry into the cultivated land, "the sown." Their request is granted, and they enter and share in the divine fare. These themes appear also in the Bible. The divinely ordered expulsion resembles God's decree in Daniel 4 that for seven seasons Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, leave society and live with animals, and the description of the ravenous Lovely Gods in the desert is echoed in biblical descriptions of the hungry and thirsty Israelites in the wilderness (as in Ps. 107:4–9).

The feast is a moment when destructive and beneficial deities meet without conflict. The cosmic forces of destruction are allowed to share in the divine feast derived from the fruits that in a sense come from Death's demise (lines 8–11). These Lovely Gods are therefore not merely warded off or destroyed, like Death. Rather, if only for a ritual moment, they share the food and wine of the divine feast belonging to the beneficial, life-giving gods and goddesses as well as their human counterparts.

This text does not contain the combat with Death known from *Baal*. Instead, we have a mythology of Death without Baal. It celebrates both the destruction of death and the incorporation of destructive divine forces from the desert into the sown, the realm of life. The text is thus a sort of firstfruits celebration of agricultural fertility, situated in the late summer or early autumn during what has been called "the fall interchange period"

between the dry and rainy seasons. The opposition of spatial categories, desert versus sown, is reconciled during this period, which is experienced on the terrestrial plane in the shift of weather patterns from the dry summer to the coming of the early fall rains, but also perhaps realized or read on the cosmic plain in the stars, at the time of the autumnal equinox. Taken together, these elements presented in *The Lovely Gods* would have expressed a powerful understanding of fertility and blessing in the universe, both in heaven and on earth. Standing within and behind this presentation is the monarchy, which would have benefited from this highly charged, symbolic ritual.

The Lovely Gods

The front of the tablet

“Let me invite the lovely gods,

indeed, the beautiful ones, sons of . . .

Those given offerings on high . . .

in the desert, on the summits . . .

To their heads and . . .

Eat of every food,

and drink of every vintage wine.

Peace, O king! Peace, O queen!

O enterers and guards!”

“Death the Ruler sits;

in his hand a staff of bereavement,

in his hand a staff of widowhood.

The pruner prunes him like a vine;

10the binder binds him like a vine;

he is felled to the terrace like a vine.”

Seven times it is recited over the dais,

and the enterers respond:

“And the field is the field of El,

the field of Asherah and Rahmay.”

On the fire seven times

the boys with a good voice,

coriander in milk,

mint in curd.

15And on the basin seven times:

incense.

“Rahmay goes hunting . . .

she is girded with lovely might . . .”

And the names of the enterers . . .

The divine homes are eight,

. . . seven times.

Lapis lazuli, red, crimson are the singers.

“Let me invite the lovely gods,

ravenous pair a day old, day-old boys,

who nurse the nipples of Asherah’s breasts . . .

Sun braids their branches,

. . . and grapes.

Peace, O enterers and guards,

who process with lovely sacrifice.”

“The field is that of El,

the field of Asherah and Rahmay.”

Line 29 is too damaged to read.

Lines 30–35 are on the bottom edge of the tablet

. . . to the seashore,

and he marched to the shore of the Deep.

El . . . the two servers,

servers at the top of the pot.

See her—she is low! See her—she is high!

See her—she declares: “Father, father!”

And see her—she declares: “Mother, mother!”

El’s hand lengthens like the sea,

El’s hand, like the flood.

El’s hand lengthens like the sea,

El’s hand, like the flood.

The back of the tablet

El takes the two servers,

servers at the top of the pot;

he takes, sets them in his house.

As for El, his staff drooped,

as for El, his love-shaft sank.

He lifted, he shot heavenward,

he shot a bird in the heavens,

he plucked it, set it on the coals.

El enticed the two women.

Now if the two women declare:

40“O man, man,

your staff droops,

your love-staff sinks!

Look—a bird

you’re roasting on the fire,

burning on the coals,”

then the two women will be wives of El,

wives of El, his forever.

But if the two women declare:

“O father, father,

your staff droops,

your love-staff sinks!

Look—a bird

you’re roasting on the fire,

burning on the coals,”

then the two women will be daughters of El,

daughters of El, his forever.

See, the two women declared:

“O man, man,

your staff droops,

your love-staff sinks!

Look—a bird

you're roasting on the fire,

burning on the coals."

So the two women became wives of El,

wives of El, his forever.

He bent down, kissed their lips,

their lips were so sweet,

sweet as pomegranates.

As he kissed, there was conception,

as he embraced, there was passion.

The two crouched and gave birth

to Dawn and Dusk.

Word was brought to El:

“El’s two wives have given birth.”

“What have they borne?”

“A newborn pair, Dawn and Dusk.”

“Make an offering to Lady Sun,

and to the stationary stars.”

55He bent down, kissed their lips,

their lips were so sweet.

As he kissed, there was conception,

as he embraced, there was passion.

He sat, counted to five,

for . . . the Assembly sings.

The two crouched and gave birth,

gave birth to the lovely gods,

day-old devourers, one-day-old boys,

who suck the nipple of the breast.

Word was brought to El:

60“El’s two wives have given birth.”

“What have they borne?”

“Twin lovely gods,

day-old devourers, one-day-old boys,

who suck the nipple of the breast.”

They set a lip to earth,

a lip to the heavens.

Then entered their mouths

the birds of the heavens,

and the fish in the sea.

As they move, bite upon bite

they stuffed on both their right and left

into their mouths, but they were not satisfied.

“O wives I have espoused,

sons I have fathered:

Make an offering in the holy desert,

there sojourn around rocks and brush.”

For seven years complete,

eight cycles’ duration,

the lovely gods roamed about the open country,

they hunted out to the edge of the desert.

The two approached the guard of the sown,

and the two declared to the guard of the sown:

“O guard, guard, open up!”

And he himself opened a breach for them,

and the two entered:

“If there is food,

give it so that we may eat!

If there is wine. . . ,

give it so that we may drink!”

And the guard of the sown answered them:

“. . . there is wine for whoever enters . . .”

75. . . he himself approached,

he served a measure of his wine . . .

and his companion filled it with wine. . .

EL'S DRINKING PARTY

INTRODUCTION

Discovered in 1961, this short text was the latest found of those translated in this book. It also differs from the others in its hardly flattering depiction of the god El. As such, it reminds us that Canaanite religion was more complex and multifaceted than the longer myths suggest.

The text has two parts, both addressing the problem of intoxication. The first is a short mythic narrative of El's drinking party and his resulting drunkenness, which leads to two goddesses undertaking a search for ingredients for a cure. Separated from the first part by a scribal line, the second part is a short prescription for a hangover.

The myth draws on a traditional setting for drinking, which in Ugaritic is called the *mrzḥ*. At Ugarit, the *mrzḥ* was an association of elite males, which according to one legal text could be held in the home of one of its leading figures. Comparative evidence suggests that it may also have been held in a room in a shrine or temple. Two biblical passages, Jeremiah 16:5 and Amos 6:7, show the association of drinking with this institution (in Hebrew *marzeaḥ*), which is attested down into the Greco-Roman period.

The text opens with El making preparations for his banquet, which the deities then enjoy. The preparations are notable for involving "game," wild animals that were hunted. Such game is not included in the lists of offerings made to the gods in Ugarit's ritual texts; here it resonates with the later description of the goddesses going to hunt for the ingredients to cure El's drunken state.

Then the god Moon appears, in an otherwise unparalleled description as a dog. Deities allied with this god—the goddesses Astarte and Anat are named—provide him meat, but the gatekeeper of El's house rebukes them for doing so. While the comparison of Moon with a dog dovetails with the "hair of the dog" in the prescription at the end of the text, it is unclear how to understand this simile, as well as the rest of his description. The significance of the details about his being fed is likewise unclear. One interpretation is that the *mrzḥ* is a funerary feast that renders Moon this way because the moon god was thought to be in the underworld by day. However, funerals were likely only one of the several functions when the *mrzḥ* took place, and Moon's role in the underworld lacks evidence. Another view is that the apparently negative portrait of Moon reflects a polemic against the worship of the moon god at Ugarit. While this is possible, it has little basis in the Ugaritic texts. Moon is a well-known astral deity, as is Astarte; Anat may be one as well, although this is less

clear. Some aspect of Moon's nature as an astral god might lie behind this otherwise cryptic passage.

The text next turns to El's condition. The gatekeeper rebukes El, who is then sitting in his *mrzḥ*. He drinks until he is "dead drunk" (note the images in lines 21–22) and requires two deities to help get him home. They serve here in one of the classic roles that a son is to perform for his father. At the beginning of *Aqhat*, Danel states that among his son's many duties is "to hold his hand when he is drunk, to support him when he is full of wine."

On the way, El is confronted with an unusual sight. The figure of Habayu, described in this section as "lord of horns and a tail," is otherwise unknown in the Ugaritic texts. Most scholars think that El soils himself with his own excrement and urine, but it has been recently suggested that it is Habayu who soils the drunken El. Later medical prescriptions use dung, which may be included in the prescription at the end of the text. More precise identification of Habayu is difficult; he may be Resheph, who is the only West Semitic god depicted with a tail, and his counterpart at the site of Emar, Nergal, is called "lord of horns." Resheph was a god associated with destruction (as seen in the opening scene of *Kirta*), as well as death and the underworld. The specter of a figure with horns and a tail may be a precursor of much later images of the devil.

The end of the myth presents Anat and Astarte going hunting to find ingredients to help cure El's hangover. At this point, the text breaks off until the two goddesses have returned, evidently with ingredients in hand. Elsewhere these goddesses are associated with the hunt; in *Aqhat*, Anat wants the hero's bow for herself.

The final lines of the text give the prescription to cure a hangover. The first part consists of dog hair, which is to be placed on the head of the suffering person. The *pqq* in the second part of the prescription may be a technical term, perhaps a plant, or possibly dung. Whatever it is, it is to be mixed with olive oil and then applied or ingested, perhaps in order to calm the stomach of the drunken person or to cause the person to throw up. The description of the olive oil as "fresh" suggests the late summer or early fall as the time of year in which the myth is set. This also fits the drinking, since "new wine" was made with grapes harvested at this time of year.

Some ingredients in the prescription correspond to elements in the narrative, and drunkenness is the general subject of both parts. Furthermore, in the myth it is the goddesses Astarte and Anat who go hunting for the ingredients, and the prescription lists such items. In addition, the dog hair corresponds in a general way with the description of Moon as a dog. The *pqq*, if it is a word for dung, would fit with the excrement mentioned in the myth. With these correspondences, the myth describes what the cure prescribes. Perhaps, as in other ancient Near Eastern medical literature, the text was supposed to be recited with the giving of the prescription.

El’s Drinking Party

The front of the tablet

1El slaughtered game in his house,

game in the midst of his palace,

invited the gods to the choice cuts.

The gods ate and drank,

drank wine until they were full,

new wine until they were drunk.

Moon set his body down like a dog,

he crawled beneath the tables.

The god who knew him

prepared food for him;

and the one who did not know him

beat him with sticks beneath the table.

Astarte and Anat he approached;

Astarte had a steak prepared for him,

and Anat a shoulder cut.

The gatekeeper of El’s house rebuked them,

not to prepare a steak for a dog,

nor prepare a shoulder cut for a hound;

he rebuked his father El as well.

El was seated . . . ,

El was seated in his drinking-party.

El drank wine until he was full,

new wine until he was drunk.

El went to his house,

he reached his court;

Thukamuna and Shunama helped him along.

Then Habayu confronted him,

lord of horns and a tail;

he smeared him with his crap and piss.

El collapsed like a corpse,

El was like those who go down to the underworld.

Anat and Astarte went hunting . . .

Lines 24–28 are broken. They may include the ingredients described in lines 29–31.

The back of the tablet

The back of the tablet begins at line 25.

Astarte and Anat . . .

with them they brought back . . .

when they do the healing, then he is revived!

A scribal line separates the narrative about El's drunkenness from a prescription to cure a hangover.

What one should apply on his forehead: dog hair;

and the top of *pqq* and . . . ,

one should apply them together with fresh olive oil.

GLOSSARY OF NAMES

Abiluma. Town of unknown location near which Aqhat was killed; its patron was the moon god.

Amurru. A place mentioned in *Baal* for its abundance of animals. It is either a coastal kingdom south of Ugarit or a region in northern Mesopotamia.

Anat. The "violent goddess," goddess of war and the hunt. She is the sister of Baal and daughter of El. She appears in winged form. Her title "Maiden" indicates her perennial nubility and her status as a young adolescent who has not borne children. Unmarried, she operates outside the authority of a husband and at times without respect for the authority of her father, El. She is also called "the Mistress of the Peoples."

Aqhat. The son of Danel, with whom he shares the epithet "the Hero." He was killed at the instigation of Anat.

Arsay. An attendant of Baal. Her name means "earthy" or "the one of the underworld." The translation of her title "maid of the wide world," if correct, would refer to the

underworld. Her name and title may indicate her kinship with Baal in his death in *Baal*.

Asherah. El's wife and the principal goddess of Sidon and Tyre. She is the "Mother of the Gods"; her name, originally pronounced Athirat, in its full form is "Athirat of the Sea."

Assembly. The council of the gods, over which El presided.

Astarte (Athtart). A goddess of love and, like Anat, of war and the hunt. She is closely related to Baal, as suggested by her title "Baal's other self" (literally, "name of Baal").

Athtar the Awesome. The deified morning star and son of Asherah, nominated by her to replace Baal; after his failure he is made a ruler on earth.

Attanu. Chief of the priests mentioned in the scribal colophon at the very end of *Baal*. He is also called a diviner.

Baal. The Canaanite storm god, as indicated by his epithet "the Rider on the Clouds." As god of the storm, his voice is thunder; he provides the essential rain, which restores vegetation to the earth. Probably because of his military might and his ability to provide rain, he is the central deity in most of the surviving myths. He is the son of Dagan. His other titles include "the Prince," "the Conqueror (of Warriors)," and "the Lord of the Earth"; he is also called "Haddu" (biblical "Hadad"). Baal

corresponds to the gods Marduk in Babylon, Zeus in Greece, and Jupiter in Rome.

Bit-Hubur. See Hubur.

Byblos. A Canaanite city and important seaport on the coast of Lebanon about twenty-five miles north of Beirut.

Caphtor. An ancient name for Crete, and one of the homes of Kothar-wa-Hasis.

Chaser. One of Baal's weapons made by Kothar-wa-Hasis in *Baal*.

Council of El. The Assembly of the gods.

Dagan. Baal's father. His name may mean "rainy one"; it is associated later with "grain." Although he has no major role in the surviving stories, he was an important deity at Ugarit. His name was pronounced Dagon among the Philistines, who adopted him as one of their principal deities (see Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:1–5).

Danataya. The wife of Danel in *Aqhat*. Her title, "Lady," marks her nobility.

Danel. The father of Aqhat and Pugat and the husband of Danataya. His patron god is apparently Baal, as he is the god who responds to his prayer. The appellation "the Hero" is an indication of his noble birth.

Dawn (Shahar). Deity of the early morning, often paired with his opposite, Dusk (Shalim). They are the sons of El by the unnamed females in *The Lovely Gods*. Rarely found in the Bible, Dawn is mentioned as the father of "Day Star" (literally, "Shining One") in Isaiah 14:12.

Death (Mot). The god of death. He rules the underworld like the Greek god Hades and the Roman god Pluto. In *Baal* he temporarily gains control over the storm god. In *The Lovely Gods* he is enthroned as king, with the power to kill. Like Sea, Death is called "El's Darling"; the title may reflect El's nature as the father of gods, both divine monsters and beneficial deities.

Desire. An enemy of Baal whom Anat claims to have killed; perhaps an aspect of Sea.

Ditan. The name of Kirta's clan. The dynasty of Ugarit traced its roots back to Ditan and considered him one of its deified ancestors, called "Ditan's company."

Dragon. A beast that dwells in the sea and is related to Sea.

Driver. One of Baal's clubs made by Kothar-wa-Hasis in *Baal*.

Dusk. See Dawn.

Egypt. Home to one of the great civilizations of the ancient world; in *Aqhat* and *Baal* it is mentioned as one of the homes of Kothar. The word more specifically refers to the city of Memphis in Egypt, which was the residence

of the god Ptah, with whom Kothar was probably identified.

El. The head of the Semitic pantheon and the father of gods and mortals, corresponding to Mesopotamian Anu and Greek Cronus. His epithets describe him: "the Bull," "the Father of Time," "Father of Humanity, "the King," "Creator of Creatures," "the Kind, the Compassionate," and "the Holy One."

El's Darling. A title of Death, of Sea, and of Desire.

Expeller. A divine agent of healing created by El in *Kirta*; her name Shataqat means "she expels (disease)."

Father of Humanity. A title of El.

Filth. A name for the underworld.

Fire. "El's bitch"; an enemy of Baal whom Anat claims to have killed.

Fisherman. A divine attendant of Lady Asherah of the Sea.

Galmat. Perhaps mother of Gapn and Ugar; her name probably means "darkness."

Gapn. One of Baal's messengers, always mentioned with Ugar. Their names mean "vineyard" (or "vine") and "field," respectively, reflecting Baal's role as fertility god. The name of Ugar also underlies the name of the city of Ugarit.

Habayu. A figure, with two horns and a tail, in *El's Drinking Party*, which rebukes El for his drunkenness and soils him with excrement and urine. Perhaps a title of Resheph.

Haddu. (biblical Hadad) A name of Baal, meaning "the thunderer."

Harnam. A city in northeastern Lebanon (modern Hermel).

Hasis. See Kothar-wa-Hasis.

Hero. A title indicating nobility applied to Aqhat, Danel, Death, and Ilihu.

Hirgab. The father of vultures.

Holy and Most Blessed One. A title of Lady Asherah of the Sea's Fisherman in *Baal*.

Horon. A god, probably of the underworld, and perhaps a son of Astarte.

Hubur. The capital city of Kirta's kingdom; also called Bit-Hubur ("house of Hubur"). Its location is unknown.

Hurriya. The daughter of Pabil and the wife of Kirta.

Ilihu. A son of Kirta and brother of Thitmanit.

Ilimilku. The scribe named in the colophon at the end of *Baal*. was a type of priest, translated here as "officiant," who worked under the chief of the priests of Ugarit named Attanu.

Ilisha. The herald god.

Inbubu. A name of Anat's mountain home.

Judge River. A title of Sea. "Judge" in Ugaritic, as also occasionally in the Bible, means "ruler." The sea was thought of as a river that encircled the earth.

Kind (and Holy) One. A title of El.

Kirta. Ruler of Hubur and hero of the cycle named after him. He was of divine parentage and was the father of Ilihu, Thitmanit, and Yassub by his wife, Lady Hurriya. He is called "the Gracious One," "the Noble," and "the Lad of El."

Kotharat. Goddesses of conception and childbirth. Their name, like that of Kothar-wa-hasis, suggests their skill in these roles. They are also called "Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon."

Kothar-wa-Hasis. The craftsman of the gods; his name means "skillful and wise." Like his Greek counterpart Hephaestus, he builds the gods' dwellings and makes their weapons. As "lord of Egypt" (more precisely, Memphis in Egypt), he was probably identified with the Egyptian god Ptah. His other titles include "the Skillful

One," "the Handcraftsman," "son of Sea," and "son of the Assembly."

Lebanon, The. The westernmost of the two mountain ranges that run from north to south through modern Syria and Lebanon. The range was often snow-covered; this is the origin of its name, which means "white."

Litan (also Lotan). One of Baal's enemies, who is called Leviathan in the Bible. He may be the offspring of Sea and thus may be regarded as a manifestation of Sea.

Lovely Gods. The pair of divinities born to El following the birth of the beneficial gods, Dawn and Dusk. Their superhuman-sized appetite threatens the world. Their name is euphemistic; they are, in fact, destructive deities.

Maiden. See Anat.

Mararat-tagullal-banir. Town of unknown location near which Aqhat was killed. Its name may mean "(the place of) the date palm that produces dates."

Mighty. A title of Judge River.

Mistress of the Peoples. A title of Anat.

Moon (Yarih). The Canaanite moon god, one of the children of El and Asherah (hence perhaps his title "Prince"), and patron of the town Abiluma.

Most High. A title of Baal.

Mount Kankaniya. A mountain at the entrance to the underworld.

Mount Lalu. The mountain where the divine Assembly meets in *Baal*. Its name may mean "night."

Mount Targuziza. A mountain at the entrance to the underworld.

Mount Tharumagi. A mountain at the entrance to the underworld.

Mount Zaphon. The mountain on which Baal lives, located north of Ras Shamra at the mouth of the Orontes River, near the present border between Turkey and Syria.

Nanaya. Mount Anti-Casius in the Lebanon. It appears in *Kirta* as a mountain that along with Mount Zaphon would weep for Kirta when he dies.

Niqmaddu. A king of Ugarit whose name appears in the scribal colophons at the end of two tablets of *Baal*. He lived in either the fourteenth or late thirteenth century BCE.

Pabil. King of Udm and father of Hurriya in *Kirta*.

Pidray. An attendant of Baal, called "maid of light." Her name probably means "misty" or "cloudy." Both her

name and title indicate her kinship with Baal in his capacity as the god of rain.

Pit. A name for the underworld in *Baal*, as it is in the Bible (e.g., Pss. 40:2; 55:23). The name may derive from the common practice of burials in pits.

Prince. A title of several gods, including Sea, Baal, and Moon.

Pugat. Danel's daughter and Aqhat's sister, who avenges the latter's death. Her name means "girl."

Qaal. A place whose location is unknown.

Qor-maym. Town of unknown location near which Aqhat was killed; its name means "source of water."

Rabbim. An enemy of Baal and Anat, associated with Sea. The name means "the many"; compare the biblical phrase "the many (or the mighty) waters."

Radiant Daughters of the Crescent Moon. A title of the Kotharat in *Aqhat*. As goddesses of conception as well as pregnancy and birth, this title may suggest an association with the counting of the months of pregnancy. The title has been understood alternatively as "The Singers, the Swallows," which would reflect these goddesses' use of incantations to induce conception as well as safe pregnancy and birth.

Rahmay. Title or name of a goddess, perhaps Anat. She goes hunting in *The Lovely Gods*, as Astarte and Anat do in *El's Drinking Party*. The word means "compassionate" or "merciful," and it is related to the word for "womb."

Rebel. The divine calf; an enemy of Baal whom Anat claimed to have killed in *Baal*.

Rephaim (Rapauma). The deified dead in the underworld, featured in *The Rephaim* and mentioned in *Baal* and *Kirta*.

Resheph. God of plague; his name means "flame" or "plague." See also Habayu.

River. See Judge River.

Samal. The mother of vultures.

Sea (Yamm). The god of the sea and one of Baal's adversaries. Like Baal's other adversary, Death, Sea is called "El's Darling."

Serpent. One of Baal's enemies, associated with Sea.

Shataqat. See Expeller.

Shunama. See Thukamuna.

Sidon. An important city on the coast of Lebanon, south of Beirut and north of Tyre.

Sirion. The mountain range east of the Lebanon, called by modern geographers the Anti-Lebanon.

Skillful Craftsman. A title of Kothar-wa-Hasis.

Skillful One. A title of Kothar-wa-Hasis.

Sun. The goddess Shapshu, called "the Gods' Torch" and "the Great Light." She commonly serves on orders of El. By night she goes through the underworld; hence she also has power over the dead.

Swamp. A name for the underworld in *Baal*.

Tallay. An attendant of Baal. Her name means "dewy," and she is called "maid of rain." Her name and title indicate her kinship with Baal in his capacity as the god of rain.

Thitmanit. The eighth daughter of Kirta and Ilihu's sister; her name means "eighth."

Thukamuna and Shunama. Two of El's sons who help him when he is drunk in *El's Drinking Party*.

Twisting Serpent. An enemy imagined as a giant snake mentioned in *Baal*. See Sea.

Tyre. An important city on the coast of Lebanon, south of Beirut and Sidon.

Udm. The capital city of Pabil's kingdom; its location is unknown.

Ugar. See Gapn.

Ugr. A name of Anat's mountain home.

Valiant One. A title of Baal.

Waves. An enemy of Anat, perhaps a manifestation of Sea.

Yadi-Yalhan. One of Asherah's sons; his name may mean "he knows how to serve."

Yaman. A place mentioned with Amurru; its exact location is unknown.

Yarih. See Moon.

Yassub. A son of Kirta. His name may mean "the one who erects (his father's mortuary stela after his death)," which is one of the duties of a son in Aqhat. In *Kirta,* the name also has the connotation of "sucker," suggesting the immaturity that he shows in rebelling against his father.

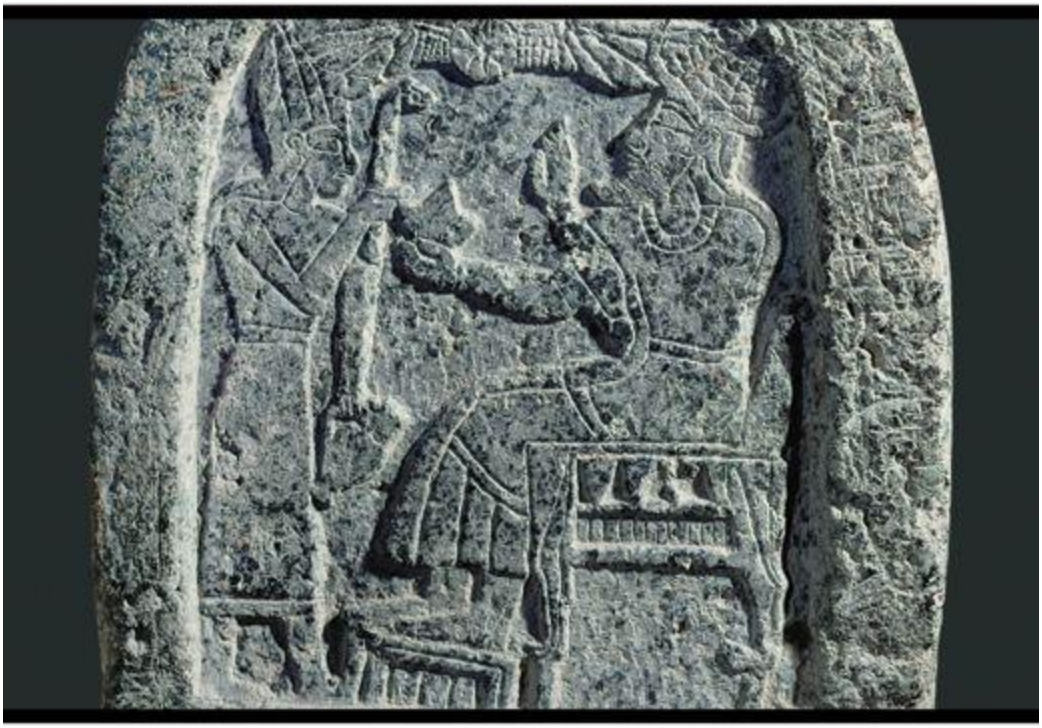
Yatpan. Anat's henchman, "the Lady's Warrior," and Aqhat's killer.

Zaphon. See Mount Zaphon.

Zebub. El's daughter and an enemy of Baal whom Anat claims to have killed; her name may mean "fly," as in the phrase "lord of the flies" (See 2 Kgs. 1).

STORIES FROM ANCIENT CANAAN

SECOND EDITION



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